

REVIEW 2.

OF

DR. H. DUNCAN'S

LETTERS

ON THE

WEST INDIA QUESTION.

[*Extracted from the Christian Instructor for January and September*
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THE REV. DR. HENRY DUNCAN'S LETTERS

TO

SIR GEORGE MURRAY,

ON THE WEST INDIA QUESTION.

(Extracted from the Edinburgh Christian Instructor.)

THOUGH we had been entirely ignorant of the contents of this pamphlet, we could have had no difficulty in estimating its real merits and value from the reception which it has experienced in certain quarters. It has been welcomed in Jamaica—so we understand—and handed about as a seasonable auxiliary to the cause of negro oppression. Mr. Keith Douglas, and other proprietors of human beings, have republished it in London, and are industriously circulating it from one end of Great Britain to the other. And what is more decisive still, the “West India Reporter,” which is zealous even to madness for the continuance of slavery, refers to it in these words: “In Scotland, particularly, an eminent clergyman foreseeing the consequences of that rash spirit by which some abolitionists are governed, has explained the subject of colonial slavery on Christian principles.” Such testimonies as these to Presbyter’s letters would have convinced us of their unsoundness, even if we had never read a word of them, and determined us to regard them as hostile to the great cause of freedom and humanity. Our previous acquaintance with their author, as one dear to us by reason of his enlightened views and philanthropic labours in other departments, could not have overcome the evidence of his heterodoxy, here afforded by the eulogium and the patronage of Jamaica planters, Mr. Keith Douglas,* and the conductors of the periodical in whose pages his name is recorded with such distinguished honour. These are devoted to the cause of slavery; they are eagle-eyed to discover whatever tends to aid or uphold it; and their decided approval and commendation of Dr. Duncan’s work, leave us no room for doubting that it goes to strengthen the party, and promote the designs, of the Anti-abolitionists.

If our opinion needed confirmation, that is assuredly obtained by a perusal of the letters themselves. For, while there are not a few sentiments in which we can cheerfully coincide, and some indignant expressions against cruelty and injustice with which we cordially sympathize, there is also such a load of erroneous principles, misrepresented facts, and sophistical reasonings, laid upon these, as absolutely to over-

* We shall not forget this gentleman, and his connexion with Tobago, in the course of our discussions. What a shame that such personages should be buyers and sellers of their fellow-men! It would be just and useful to show up, name and surname, titles and offices, all the Nobles and Honourables of our land, who are interested in upholding the slave system. It might help to let us see why it is that a system so nefarious and detestable has been so long permitted to exist, and why it is that the people at large are still doomed to petition in vain for its extermination.

whelm and extinguish them. What is good, might have been tolerable, though not very useful, had it stood alone ; but unfortunately it is so associated and mingled with what is literally bad, as to be completely neutralized. We could pick out sentences, and perhaps paragraphs, which by themselves a planter would nauseate and reject—and that says much for them—but really every thing of this kind is so sweetened to his taste by the intermixture or the accompaniment of what he likes, that he can easily swallow, and even greatly enjoy it. The slavery question is in a peculiar critical state—the public feeling and the public voice are mustering strong for abolition—many who have been long and patiently waiting for that event, are wearied, aye disgusted, with the delay which has taken place in bringing it about—religious and moral obligation is far more than ever an element in the warfare that is waged against a continuance of the evil—stronger impressions prevail of its incurable nature, under any plan of management that can be adopted—and there is a firm and increasing determination to have it immediately and totally done away with, as an intolerable nuisance—as a crying and destructive and ever-to-be-abhorred iniquity. In these circumstances Dr. Duncan steps forward, and draws upon his ingenuity for materials wherewith to prop and bolster up the falling cause. He produces a work which years ago would not have been altogether acceptable to the colonists, because they did not need it, and it contains some things which they cannot but dislike. But still his work is so constructed, that while it looks candid and reasonable and pious, and professes to be inimical to that which it is written to support, meets the peculiar exigencies of their case—sings the old song, with a new accompaniment and a winning voice, of the perils of dispatch and the necessity of delay—holds out deceptive views of past improvement, and equally deceptive prospects of future amelioration—labours to reconcile us to what we so justly abhor, by reminding us that the guilt of the slaveholder is not greater than the guilt of the community—and what is worst, though most useful and seasonable for the men whose interests it advocates, employs, desecrates, prostitutes Christianity to the purpose, not merely of palliating, but of perpetuating a system which in all its aspects stands diametrically opposed to whatever is righteous and merciful, in that most righteous and merciful dispensation. Let the doctrine which it propounds and urges be acted upon by this country, and we have no hesitation in saying that colonial slavery becomes a fixture in the Empire of Great Britain: the colonists will choose to retain it, and they will appeal for this to the sanction of the Gospel, so liberally pressed upon their notice by the zeal of its ministers. No wonder then that Presbyter's letters are distributed by the hand of Mr. Keith Douglas, and find their eulogy in the pages of the West India Reporter.

In his first letter, Dr. Duncan offers some introductory remarks which require animadversion. It is plain, from what our Reverend friend states in p. 10, that he is very much alarmed at the present state of the question. The "meetings" that have been held, the "petitions" that have been prepared, and the "publications" that have issued from the press, have filled him, as one of the "sober thinking and impartial men" whom he alludes to, with fearful apprehension. And it is quite clear that he considers these things as very wrong and very injurious. The slave *trade* he speaks of as altogether horrible and atrocious; and in doing so he is quite safe, for it is not now to be abolished, though the very same arguments that he makes use of in defence of colonial

slavery, were used in defence of that nefarious traffic. But does he suppose that the trade would ever have been put an end to, or that our country would not still have been burdened with the ignominy and the guilt of it—had there been no meetings, and petitions, and publications? That such an apparatus is necessary for securing the abolition of that system which is the legitimate offspring of the trade, and marked with the same features of misery and crime, is the disgrace of our government, of our self-called representatives, of the Doctor's worthy and hopeful friends in the western Archipelago. And those who have erected it, and are plying it with vigour, have the honour, and should have the praise, of standing up for the privileges of their African brethren, when these privileges are violated and contemned by the men, who, having the power to do right, deliberately and pertinaciously exercise it in doing wrong. To talk, as our reverend brother does, with displeasure, of "exciting the public indignation against the colonists, and depreciating the value of the colonies," is utterly absurd. Does he not know that his party have exaggerated the value of the colonies beyond all measure, in order to propitiate our favour to their cause of No-abolition? Is it not an act of that "sober thinking and impartiality" which he arrogates to his side of the dispute, but which is nevertheless a good thing, to reduce that value to its true and proper rate? And after all, what is the amount of this value, whatever it may turn out to be, when put in the balance against the claims of justice and humanity? And as to the "indignation against the colonists," for which we are blamed, whose fault is it that such a feeling exists? Why, it is the fault of the colonists themselves, who have notoriously set their hearts not only against the emancipation of the slaves, but even against almost all those measures which were suggested by Parliament, enacted or recommended by the ministry, and sanctioned by the whole country, for mitigating the hardships and amending the condition of the negroes. If indignation had not been felt and expressed at such rebellious conduct as this, we should have been guilty of a degree of apathy which would have been irrational and unjustifiable, even in regard to the slightest personal injury, that one man can perpetrate against another. The wonder is,—the error has been, that the indignation complained of was not long ere now felt with far greater keenness, and expressed in a far more emphatic tone. It is, moreover, strange enough that the "sober-thinking and impartial men" who cannot "contemplate" a speedy deliverance to the slaves from their galling yoke "without alarm," should be able to contemplate, with calmness and satisfaction, the indefinite prolongation of that bondage, and even assist in the project of making it interminable,—characterised as it is by the most horrid cruelty and oppression, and obnoxious as it must render its abettors to the vengeance of that God who has "made of one blood all the nations that dwell on the face of the earth."

Dr. Duncan remarks, with a justness which does not distinguish all that he says, that "the very name of slavery is happily abhorrent to the inhabitants of this free and Christian land." (p. 11.) And why is the very name of slavery so abhorrent? The man who can answer this question correctly will never have the courage to defend slavery; he will not despise the freedom of a single African when put in competition with the pecuniary gains even of all the white population of the West; and far less will he impress Christianity into the immoral and ignoble service of fencing round the interests of the oppressor, and rivetting the chains of the oppressed. We marvel that, having committed such a sentiment to

paper, the Doctor did not see and feel in it a barrier to his farther progress in the road he was pursuing,—a restraint at least on all his movements thereafter in behalf of the slaveholders,—a preventive of many of those pleadings and statements by which his subsequent pages are deformed. But, alas! true and admirable as the sentiment is, our author uses it as an introduction to a passage in which he tirades against such as declaim on the enormities and iniquities of West India slavery, and is apparently much displeased at the exaggeration said to be indulged in by the speakers, and even condescends on something like a catalogue of these exaggerations. Exaggerations “with such a mixture of truth as serves to conceal them.” Indeed! Had he said, truths with such a mixture of exaggeration, as might be expected in a case where feeling necessarily and justly mingles with fact and reasoning, he would have been much nearer the verity. For our part we are at a loss to discover the exaggerations. The truths meet us broad and undeniable at every step of his detail. But as for the exaggerations, we have scarcely got a glimpse of one, except it be a word here and there which our author himself has thrown in to give a colour to his own picture. Does Dr. Duncan mean to deny that West India sugar and coffee are raised by the forced labour of negro slaves?—that these slaves are driven to their daily toil by the lash already red with their blood?—that such of them as have been imported from Africa were free-born, and treacherously torn from their native land?—that the middle passage through which they came had horrors?—that they are subjected to a degrading, miserable, cruel, unmitigated bondage?—that the descendants of these injured beings are born to the same hopeless and heartless thralldom? Does he mean to deny these things? He cannot. He may quibble on the phrases used by himself, and alleged to be used by others, “free-born Africans,” and “unmitigated bondage,” and “red with blood.” But he can only quibble; for many of the Africans were literally free-born, and all of them were free-born, so far as the West India planters had any thing to do with them; the bondage to which they are reduced, as it respects moral and intellectual beings, and considered in its systematic tendencies, neither is, nor admits of being, mitigated; and the lash (cart-whip, if you please) is not unfrequently stained with the blood of its victims, and the colonial law permits it to be covered with that badge of cruelty, whenever a planter or his underlings may choose to wield it, even for the gratification of mere resentment or caprice.

But our reverend friend, though he seems to allow, p. 12, that “the crowds of miserable beings who had been violently removed from the land of their fathers, are still doomed to endure a yoke unjustly imposed,” and that there “are facts the very mention of which is calculated to rouse and inflame the mind,” and that the sentiment with which every generous heart must burn on the first consideration of the question is, ‘Let us at once and for ever wash off this foul stain from the British name,’—is pleased to intimate that the resolution is founded on “partial statement,” that it is formed in defiance of “prudential reasoning and cool deliberation,” and that it is only to be corrected by “more enlarged views of the interests of the slaves, and of the claims of the masters.” Now, in this mode of stating the case, he takes for granted what we point blank deny. He makes the supposition, that his opponents come to their conclusion under the guidance of mere ardent feeling. And yet his supposition, as announced by himself, is

not very consistent, or rather it is most contradictory. For he allows, that we have the violence and injustice implied in slavery to awaken our displeasure, and call forth our denunciations. He admits these to be "facts;" and he acknowledges that they are "calculated to rouse and inflame the mind." And is there here no process of reasoning,—no sound moral premises,—no inference regularly and logically deduced? We think there is,—though doubtless it is accompanied with strong feeling. But that feeling originates in a powerful and adequate cause; and the mind that can divest itself of such a feeling, or is not susceptible of it, we hold to be thoroughly incompetent to take a part in the present controversy. And verily we would much rather exclaim, even at the hazard of being called wild enthusiasts, "Let us at once and for ever wash off these foul stains of iniquity and oppression," than be guilty of creeping to the slowly-concocted cold-blooded resolution, even with all the praise of dispassionateness that could be bestowed, "Let us a hundred years hence,—let us never,—withdraw our patronage and protection from the slave-holders." But is Dr. Duncan warranted to represent his opponents as having now for the "*first*" time considered the question which they have decided in favour of speedy emancipation? Is he entitled to say that they have been guilty either of giving to others, or of being influenced themselves by, "*partial* statements?" Can he venture to assert that they have not "*reasoned*" as "*prudently*" as they are able, and "*deliberated*" as "*coolly*" as the subject of debate permits or requires? Their "*views*" may not be so "*enlarged*" as are his and Mr. Keith Douglas's; but they are not ambitious to have that "*enlargement of views*" which consists in seeing the necessity of still longer eating the fruits of violence, protracting the reign of injustice, and persevering in immorality and crime. And we believe that they are as capable of thinking, reasoning, and judging as either of these gentlemen, and more so, we rather opine, if the Letters of the Doctor and the parliamentary speeches of Mr. Douglas are to be taken as the criterion of their powers; and sure we are, for we know it, that many of them have studied the subject with a degree of minuteness, and for a length of time, and in a spirit of candour and consideration, as to which neither the author nor the hawker of the pamphlet before us can easily have surpassed them.

It is no very auspicious circumstance, in the outset of Dr. Duncan's discussions of the question at issue, that he regards it as a "*political question*," and, as it appears to us, nothing more. True, he does consider the bearing of Christianity upon it; but with no other view, and to no other result, than that of tossing Christianity out of the scale, as not affording any authoritative rule, or any distinct precept, against slavery. His great concern is to calculate worldly interests and pecuniary consequences—to determine what ought to be done by the maxims of a secular expediency—and to put a mercantile drag upon the wheels of moral rectitude which will scarcely allow them to move, if a little indolence should attach to the disenthralled negro, or if a penny should be lost to the tyrant from whose grasp the negro has been rescued. We do not think that "any political question can be wisely determined under the exaggerated influence of excited feeling." But, in the *first* place, we deny that the slave question has been, or will be, determined under any such influence as is here condemned, on the part of the abolitionists; and if we may judge from the language of the West India Reporter, and other eulogists of Presbyter's Letters, and from the conduct of sundry colonial legislatures and colonial vestries, we should

humbly believe that "the exaggerated influence of excited feeling" is more likely to sway the friends than the enemies of slavery. And, in the *second* place, we affirm that the question of slavery is mainly a religious and moral question, and that its political is its subordinate character. Too long has it been regarded chiefly in the latter point of view, and to this is it owing that there still remains a question at all. Too readily and reluctantly have men been brought to try it by the standard of essential justice and pure Christianity. And when we are getting the public mind more alive to the paramount obligations under which we are, as believers in the Word of God, to let the oppressed go free, in steps our reverend fellow-labourer in the ministration of that word, and because attempts are made to "excite the feelings" of the country, by showing how basely and cruelly the negroes are situated, and then to rouse them to action by an "influence" which, so far from being exaggerated, is not yet half so powerful as it ought to be, strives to divest the subject of all that is most sacred in it, and instead of looking at it in the light of piety and righteousness, would have us to "determine it wisely," by determining it according to the logic of the Exchequer and the arithmetic of the counting-house.

It is very amusing to observe the way in which our worthy friend mistakes his opponents, and forgets himself. Like other abolitionists of the same class, he states the deep interest that he feels in the ultimate manumission of the slaves, and his sincere and Christian regard for their welfare; and, having stated this, he tells us, that, on that very account, he is

"most anxious that his fellow-citizens should look at the subject in all its bearings, and should not take either their facts or opinions from the fervid speeches delivered at public meetings, or from the *ex parte* statements of tracts and periodical publications."

Now, what aileth the Doctor at speeches delivered at public meetings? And what aileth him at fervour in these speeches, if there is good cause for it? And, if fervour is ever allowable in speeches, is it not most allowable in those which are directed against the cruel and systematic oppression of human beings? Does the Doctor recollect any meetings that were wont to be held on the dry subject of Savings Banks? Does he recollect who it was that made speeches on those occasions? Does he recollect if there was any fervour in said speeches? And does he recollect whether or not the speaker expected that his audience would take both "facts and opinions" from them, and was exceedingly delighted that they did so? And does the Doctor recollect a meeting that was assembled at Dunfries some time ago, for the purpose of petitioning Parliament against slavery? And does he recollect who made a fervid speech to extinguish its fervour, and to break it up, and to frustrate its holy purpose? Could it possibly be the Doctor himself—who yet declaims so lustily against fervid speeches delivered at public meetings in support of the abolition cause?

But then "*the ex parte statements of tracts!*" Good again. Tracts! Why, Dr. Duncan is himself the author of some of the very best tracts that exist in the English and Scotch languages; and we wish that he would write more of them—any thing but such a tract as that which we are now reviewing. Can nothing be true or useful but what is contained in a thick octavo, a heavy quarto, a ponderous folio? Then has our friend produced very little that is either true or useful. Did he mean his present tract to be an example of this? We see nothing in the size, shape, or necessities of a tract that should make its statements

partial. There are some tracts, indeed, in which such statements abound. We could mention one; but that is the fault of the writer, and not of the tract *qua* tract. Dr. Duncan should not speak irreverently of tracts, by which, till this unhappy hour, he has done so much good; and only speak irreverently of them in so far as they are on the side (*ex parte*) of humanity, and at the same time "remember to forget" that, at the very moment, his own pen is inditing a tract on the side (*ex parte*) of slavery.

The Doctor's allusion to "periodical publications" is not in the least degree more felicitous. The periodical literature of Dr. Duncan has often delighted and instructed his fellow-citizens; and it is both inconsistent and ungrateful in him to decry the instrument by which so much of his own fame has been acquired. If he has any reference at all to such a humble vehicle of "facts and opinions" as this Magazine, we can only say, that our accuser has not unfrequently honoured it with papers, whose excellence nobody ever disputed, and will in all likelihood add to its respectability by his future communications,—which we shall be glad to receive, provided they do not touch upon the slave question. Perhaps he aims his blow at the Anti-Slavery Reporter; in which case, we advise him to meet it on the fair field of open and specific debate, where his challenge would be accepted, and the justice of his attack ascertained, in place of throwing out a general charge, which may mislead the ignorant and the simple, who confide in "tracts," without an opportunity of correcting error or exposing sophistry. But, whatever be the journals or periodicals against which our reverend friend is desirous to guard his readers, we must not be prevented from laughing—we cannot help it—at his coolly practising in his own case the very thing which, at the same moment, he is endeavouring to discredit in the case of his opponents. Presbyterian's Letters appeared *periodically*—they appeared in the pages of a newspaper, and thus had the advantage or the disadvantage of being *doubly periodical*. And after having given his "facts and opinions" all the currency they could get by means of *periodical* publication, he collects his letters, puts them into the form of a small volume of *tracts*, and in that *hateful* form he consigns what he had produced in the other equally *hateful* form, into the hands of Mr. Keith Douglas,* the slave proprietor, that he may circulate it throughout the whole length and breadth of the land!

"*Ex parte* statements," we readily acknowledge, are unfavourable to a sound and accurate decision on the merits of any cause. But we cannot go into the notion that such statements are peculiar to tracts and periodicals, or that they are even so dangerous there as they are in the pages of bulkier and more imposing publications, such as some of those are on which Dr. Duncan implicitly and ludicrously relies. We agree with the Doctor also when he observes, "how much men attached to a party, or under the influence of some strong feeling, are, with the most honest intentions, liable to be biassed in their judgments; and how unwilling they naturally are to admit the truth of every fact which militates against their views, or even tends to modify them." But he forgets that the "party" that in this case may be considered as most obnoxious to his

* It is perfectly well known that the West India Committee have a large fund for the purpose of carrying on their opposition to the abolitionists. Will Mr. Keith Douglas give his word of honour that no part of it has been expended in printing and distributing Dr. Duncan's Letters?

remark, is the very party that he supports—the slave-holders—who have a personal and pecuniary interest in upholding that system, which we can have no motive for destroying but what is derived from the dictates of justice and the claims of humanity. We gain nothing but a victory over oppression, if we succeed; our antagonists tell us, that, in the event of our success, they lose every thing. And really when the Doctor adds, that “writers and speakers generally regard it as a legitimate artifice to throw into the shade all opposing arguments, and to give a high, if not a false colouring to every thing which tends to advance their cause; and that persons of this description are very unsafe guides on a subject so interesting to the feelings, and involving such momentous considerations as those which relate to the state of our Western colonies,” (p. 13)—it naturally occurs to us to say, that the Doctor may speak for himself, but that we repudiate his observation as by no means applicable to the adversaries of slavery. It is very ingenuous and simple withal in him to confess, that, as a *writer* and a *speaker*, he feels a strong tendency to misrepresent the arguments and circumstances that make against him—this we shall not forget in the course of our discussion, and, indeed, such is the tenor of his pages, that he will not allow us to forget it. But we cannot allow him to charge *us* with the same leaning to error and exaggeration which he acknowledges and exemplifies in himself. And this is just as it should be; for he is acting chiefly as a politician,—we are acting chiefly as moralists; those whose interests he has espoused see nothing in the decision of the point at issue between us but the question of pecuniary profit and loss,—we are concerned for rescuing our fellow-men from the yoke of usurpation and tyranny, and vindicating the honour and authority of religion, and restoring the reign of righteousness and mercy over the wronged and the helpless. And the most jaundiced, if not wholly blind to truth, must see that there is an *ex facie*, and more than an *ex facie*, case made out for us, before we begin the controversy; for the broad, undisguised, and appalling fact that is presented to us on the other side, is that of 800,000 rational and immortal beings held as animal property, bought and sold, worked and lashed, like the beasts that perish, for no crimes of their own, but solely to glut the avarice, and minister to the pleasures, of those by whom they are thus held in cruel bondage.

It is somewhat curious that our worthy friend, after thus conceding, that, as a *writer* and *speaker*, he is to be classed among the “*unsafe guides*,” or, at least, by the strain and the generality of his remarks, laying himself fairly open to that imputation, proceeds straightway to arrogate to himself a singular degree of candour, and sobriety, and disinterestedness, in considering the slavery question, as contrasted with the “uninformed zeal and misguided benevolence” of those whom he withstands, and whom he accuses of proposing “hasty and violent measures,” which are likely to end in “fatal consequences!” The Doctor, we grant, has abundance of zeal; but whether it is accompanied with information, will appear in the sequel. And as to his benevolence, no one who knows him can for a moment doubt of it; but surely in the present instance he has made it rather questionable, since it has led him to defend a measure which not merely his opponents deem iniquitous and unmerciful to the poor negroes—we mean the prolongation of their bondage,—but for defending which he secures to himself the patronage of Mr. Keith Douglas, and the laudations of the *West India Reporter*. Far be it from us to impugn the sincerity with which he declares, “that, from his youth to the present hour, he

has entertained only one desire on the subject, and that this desire has been for the final emancipation of the Africans, placed by the unprincipled cupidity of our forefathers under British domination." But we do think it an unfortunate proof of this, that he has published a work which has been hailed and eulogized by those whose "interests and prepossessions are favourable to slavery." We do think it suspicious that, when he speaks of the "unprincipled cupidity of our *forefathers*," he should have neglected even to hint at the equally unprincipled cupidity of the present generation, to which it is entirely owing that the Africans are still in "the house of bondage." And we do take it upon us to add,—though it is in some degree anticipating a point to be afterwards more fully considered,—that our author, though he may be looking forward to final emancipation, has done what he could, by his whole reasoning as to the bearing of Christianity upon the morality of slavery, to strengthen the hands of the anti-abolitionists, and has especially cut off even *final* emancipation from all connexion with religion, by the following declaration, p. 126, "*Slavery only becomes sinful when it is inconsistent with the temporal or spiritual welfare of the bondmen*,"—a declaration which not only in terms allows that the system may be innocently perpetuated, but which, it is clear from the context, is intended by the writer to have that meaning.

Dr. Duncan is very anxious to dis sever the slave-trade from slavery, —to consider the two subjects as totally separate and distinct,—and to withdraw our attention altogether from the former, when we are deciding upon the merits and continuance of the latter. Even the way in which he speaks of the abolition of the trade convinces us that, in common with many, he entertains most inadequate ideas of the turpitude which has characterised our whole treatment of the negroes from first to last. He speaks of Britain having "*achieved a glory*" (p. 14,) to herself, by putting an end to the wholesale barbarities that were practised on the coast of Africa, and on the middle passage, and ranks it with the other *glories* by which she has immortalized herself on the bosom of the "very ocean, which was conscious of her disgraceful cruelties." *Glory!* Yes, it was a glory for Clarkson, and Wilberforce, and others, who contended nobly and perseveringly against a mighty host of worldly and wicked men, and succeeded by their holy striving in giving a death-blow to the detestable traffic in human beings. But it was no *glory* to Britain,—since Britain must be identified with a Parliament which set at defiance a united people, pleading for the termination of the grossest outrages on the law and the creatures of God, that the earth ever witnessed,—it was no *glory* to Britain; it was merely an act of simple, tardy, parsimonious justice on her part, no more entitled, not nearly so much entitled, to praise, as the thief is who has been preying for twenty years upon the property of the fatherless and the widow, and has at last been constrained to cease from this transgression of the divine commandments! But to this misnomer Dr. Duncan adds an extraordinary assumption, when he would decide the question of emancipation without once looking back to the atrocities of the slave-trade. "The present question," says he, "is of a very different nature, and ought not to bear the odium of delinquencies, over which time has, for a quarter of a century, been passing her hand." And so although he "will not say one word in palliation of the horrors" which attended the "original transportation of so many of the black population of Africa to the West,"—yet, as that population "now live in our islands," the "only

question that remains is, how we shall best acquit ourselves, nationally and individually, of our responsibility" with respect to them! This, no doubt, is the question,—but it is a question for determining which "wisely" we must take into account the manner in which the black population came under British rule, which was, as the Doctor admits, by "the unprincipled cupidity of our forefathers,"—meaning by our forefathers, of course, those who plundered Africa, and bought or stole her children so very, very long ago as before the year 1807, at which period the Doctor himself has been in existence for more than thirty years! It is very convenient for the anti-abolitionists to forbid all retrospect; but this we cannot agree to, without helping to establish a maxim which goes to legalize any iniquity that may be practised and persisted in for a certain period,—the maxim of "once stolen,—kept for two twelvemonths,—and mine for ever." A. steals B.'s horse,—takes it to a distant part of the country,—works it for three or four seasons,—and when B. at length discovers the rogue, and demands his steed, A. refuses, and, borrowing fine diction and bad morality from *Presbyter's Letters*, coolly replies to the rightful owner, "The question of restitution ought not to bear the odium of delinquencies, of which 'God forbid that I should say one word in palliation,' but over which time has, for summers and winters, been passing her hand. And so I will e'en keep what I have got." The right of the slaves to emancipation cannot be detached from the manner in which these beings were brought into captivity. We will afterwards see the important and legitimate use to be made of this connexion in the prosecution of our argument. In the mean time, we protest against the two things being disjoined, as what is neither rational nor fair, and what cannot be submitted to on any account whatever.

In the conclusion of his first Letter, Dr. Duncan is pleased to say that "Every one sees the absurdity of sending the negroes back to Africa." We beg leave to tell the Doctor that we, for our part, see no absurdity at all in such a measure. Were the negroes to object to it, we should think it not only absurd, but unjust, to attempt or to insist upon it,—though we have no doubt that if the planters could profit by such a restoration, they would soon discover it to be both a wise and a righteous thing, and do it whether the negroes wished it or not. But if the negroes who have been brought by force from Africa should demand a re-transportation thither, we beg to ask Dr. Duncan wherein lies the absurdity of acceding to the demand. We beg to ask him, upon what principle of common honesty we could refuse acceding to it. We beg to ask him, how we could retain them consistently with the principles which are invariably acted upon in this country. Supposing that one of the Doctor's parishioners were to be violently abducted from his family and his home, and carried away to the Land's end for some sinister purpose,—we know the zeal and the activity which our friend would display to get the evil redressed, and the crime punished. Having found out the robber, he would instantly and peremptorily require the stolen member of his flock to be delivered up, and give over the criminal abductor to legal vengeance. But what would he think or do were this offender to plead the distance between Dumfries-shire and Cornwall, the trouble and expense of conveyance from the one place to the other, and the far greater health and happiness enjoyed in the south than in the north, and to follow it up with saying, "Every one sees the absurdity of sending the man back to Ruthwell?" We can

fancy the Doctor's indignation at the insulting statement, and his decision in asserting his parishioner's rights; and back he would carry him, in triumph and in joy, to the shores of the Solway,—to his wife, and his children, and his own fire-side. And if there would be no *absurdity* in thus delivering and restoring a stolen Scotchman, what is the *absurdity* of delivering and restoring a stolen African? What is the *absurdity* of yielding to the requirement of a negro,—aye, of hundreds or thousands of negroes,—who say to the rulers and legislature of a country where Christianity is the national faith, and where the laws protect the personal liberty of the meanest peasant in the way that we have represented,—“ You tore us away from our native land,—you did so by a system of operations with which you yourselves have associated the phrases, ‘unprincipled cupidity,’ ‘inhuman traffic,’ ‘unspeakable atrocities,’ ‘odious delinquencies,’ ‘disgraceful cruelties,’—you have hitherto detained us against our will for your own base uses, subjecting us to unremitting and unrequited toil, and torturing us with the inflictions of your merciless cart-whip,—and we now claim it as the merest, barest justice you can do to us, that we be liberated from our chains and sent back to the place of our birth, to the scenes of our childhood, to the country where we are free at least from the white man's oppression, and the white man's contumely?” To call such an address as this *absurd* is to lose sight of the essential principle involved in the great question of abolition, and to make the decision of it depend upon the convenience and opinion of the guilty party, and not upon the rights of the oppressed, and the moral duty of doing what is obviously and undeniably equitable. And though we should not have thought of stirring the inquiry about sending the negroes back to Africa, yet since the subject has been brought into view, and settled so summarily and unceremoniously, we have deemed it necessary to comment upon it thus, in order to keep entire the moral ground on which we would chiefly rest our argument for immediate abolition.

Dr. Duncan, having ranked the idea of sending back any of the negroes to Africa in the class of those absurdities which nobody would think of breathing, goes on to say—

“ It will, I think, require no great effort of reasoning to show, that immediate manumission, in any shape, could not fail to be a curse instead of a blessing—that it would add injury to injury, and would crown all, by preparing for a whole people inevitable ruin, under the insidious and insulting name of a boon.”

In proceeding to establish his proposition, thus most dogmatically stated, and represented as almost self-evident, our good friend bethinks himself of a very serious obstacle which stands in his way, and which he finds it expedient to remove before he begins to his “no great effort of reasoning.” That obstacle lies in Christianity:—and the second Letter is employed in a vain and flimsy attempt to prove that the religion of the Bible does not condemn slavery. A few pages only are occupied with this part of the subject; but really it is so very important both in its own nature, and from the way in which it has been handled by our opponents,—so much bad theology, so many misinterpretations of Scripture have been sent forth by the Anti-Abolitionists and by the Gradualists—between whom there is a very suspicious agreement on this point,—that we feel ourselves called upon to give a full exposition of what our author has treated both concisely and superficially, and to devote a

considerable number of our pages to the demonstration of the doctrine—that revelation is directly hostile to and prohibitory of slavery.

It is alleged, that in revelation there is no express precept forbidding or condemning slavery. The truth of this allegation, and its applicability to the present question, we shall afterwards consider. But be it so, we cannot surely be contradicted when we affirm, on the other hand, that revelation nowhere gives men a general permission to enslave their fellow-men, or explicitly sanctions either the principle or the practice. There is no such position in its pages as this, “One man may deprive another of his liberty without doing wrong or acting unjustly.” There is no such commandment as this, “Thou shalt in any wise enforce thy neighbour, be his complexion black or white, to serve thee for nought, and keep him as thy property, and treat him as a bondsman all the days of his life.” There is no such declaration as this, “Wherever slavery now exists, and wherever it may hereafter exist, be it known, that such slavery is perfectly agreeable to the divine will.” Were there any thing of this kind in the Bible, we should never have proposed to abolish, but only to regulate the system which prevails in our colonies. But there is no such position—no such commandment—no such declaration, in any part of the sacred record. And therefore we enter on the argument without any thing like a disregard of God’s authority,—an advantage which is obviously of moment, especially when we recollect that the more respectable and intelligent of our opponents allow slavery to be contrary to the spirit and genius of Christianity, and an evil which Christianity not only tends to ameliorate at present, but ultimately to extirpate.

Now, we must remind our opponents, that man has such things as *natural rights*. He has rights which are not granted to him by the will of others, or vested in him by the enactments of human law. He has rights which precede his connexion with any civil government, and depend not upon its regulations and authority. He has rights which are co-existent with his being—which cleave to his *status* as a member of the human family—which arise out of the very nature with which he is endowed, and the very condition in which he is placed, as a rational creature—which are essential to his fulfilment of the first and most necessary purposes of his creation—which are conferred upon him by his Maker at the moment that he forms him with a moral constitution, and places him in that situation which he is destined to hold in this world. “If a thousand different persons,” as Dr. Paley remarks, “from a thousand different corners of the world, were cast together upon a desert island, they would from the first be every one entitled to these rights.”

One of these rights is universally allowed to be personal liberty. All moralists have agreed on putting this into the catalogue. And, indeed, it must of course be there, for, were it excluded, the rest could not be securely enjoyed, if they could be enjoyed at all. It is the natural right of every man that his personal liberty shall not be taken from him, or encroached upon by the interference of others.

We do not say that it may not be justly forfeited or lost by him. In consequence of his committing crimes against his neighbour or against society, it may be not only just, but necessary, to deprive him of it for a time, or for ever. Even in that case, it may be questioned how far he can be subjected to what is commonly called slavery, or given to others to be possessed by them as their property. We hold, that, even for

a crime, it is a violation of his natural right to liberty, when that is abridged to an extent beyond what the occasion requires, or in a manner which necessarily frustrates the ends for which he was made. But, to simplify the case, we hesitate not to admit, that criminal conduct will justify the deprivation of personal liberty, or that, in the event of such conduct, the natural right may be fairly taken away. We only maintain, that where no crime is committed—where no evil desert is established, every man's right to liberty is inviolable; and they who in that case deprive him of it, are not only guilty of injustice towards the individual himself who is so treated, but they are guilty of opposing the divine will, and of breaking that law which God has visibly written and indelibly impressed on the very being of every one of our species as he sends him forth from his creating hand. Supposing that God had not revealed any thing on the subject directly from heaven, no person in his senses could doubt that he has given us natural rights, of which liberty is one, as really and truly as if he had expressly said so from the firmament, or by a special message. And, therefore, in that gift or endowment so conferred upon us, it is necessarily implied, that those who rob us of it without any demerit on our part, are chargeable with a criminal disregard to the appointment and behest of the Supreme Ruler of all. Life is one of our natural rights; if we are innocent, a written law is not requisite to render that person morally culpable who is pleased to kill us. And, in like manner, liberty is another of our natural rights; and, if we are innocent, no more is a written law requisite to render that person morally culpable who is pleased to make slaves of us. Though revelation were perfectly silent on the subject, we could not deny the fact, nor divest ourselves of the conviction, that liberty is every man's natural right—that no man, without his own demerit, can be equitably denuded of it—that being essential to the ends of his moral existence, any of his fellows who take it from him are guilty of a moral wrong—and that its being the indisputable meaning of God's design in creating him what he is, that such a privilege should belong to him, safe from the intermeddling and aggression of others, they who trench upon it, or despoil him of it, are as much guilty of opposing and disobeying the fiat of the Almighty as those would be who should choose, for no better reason than their own profit or their own pleasure, to extinguish his life. And even granting that there were some facts or expressions in Holy Scripture which had the appearance of representing slavery as in itself a just and allowable thing, or which, by the help of ingenious criticism, might be construed into such a meaning, we should deem it wisest and safest to interpret what on that supposition is confessedly obscure or doubtful in the Bible, by those principles of natural right which are interwoven with the very frame, written on the very heart, indispensable to the very condition of man, as a moral, intellectual, and social creature, by which God speaks to us as intelligibly and decidedly as he can do in any other form short of an unambiguous verbal declaration, and which are in truth the basis on which are grounded all his dealings with us, and all our treatment of one another.

Well, then, we look to the West Indies, and we see a vast multitude of human beings who are deprived of that liberty to which God gave them a natural right, and we see them kept in that state by certain white people, who claim them, and act towards them, as their property. They are divided into two great classes, those who have been brought from Africa, and the descendants of these. Now, with regard to both,

we ask, why they have been deprived of that natural right of liberty which *they* got from their Maker as well as the proudest and the wealthiest of the anti-abolitionists themselves? Let this question be answered, first, as it respects the negroes imported from Africa.

The old story of their being an inferior race is now exploded, and will never find an advocate in Dr. Duncan,—though it occurs to us, that, on the supposition of slavery being defended by such a plea, (it was once a very common one, and not the better for being urged by David Hume the infidel,) we can distinctly perceive an acknowledgment of the principle of natural right, for it could scarcely be any thing else than the force of this principle which drove them into the monstrous extreme of denying the rationality of the negroes, and reducing them to the level of the beasts, that a justification might be established for treating them as beasts.

Nor will it be alleged that the planters have any special commission from heaven to make slaves of the negroes. God's authority is supreme over his creatures, and what he has freely given to them he can summarily take away. Let our opponents bring forward any decree or any message of the Almighty, by which the slaveholders were either enjoined or permitted to put chains on the inhabitants of Africa, and we give in at once and without a murmur. But all such pretence will of course be disclaimed.

We ask, then, if the negroes had committed any crimes by which they had legally or justly forfeited their liberty? This is another of the stale arguments that were wont to be propounded; but we believe that our reverend friend will join us in repudiating and condemning it, as both unfounded and ridiculous. Supposing that the negroes had been guilty of crimes, how came we to be the executioners of those laws which they had transgressed? What were the offences of which they had been convicted? Who tried and condemned them? Where is the record of their crime, their trial, and their sentence? What document can be produced—what testimony can be given—what facts or circumstances can be substantiated, to convince the most devoted friend of slavery that even one of the poor creatures had done any thing at all that merited enslavement, or exile to a land of never-ending bondage? On the contrary, is it not well known to all who are acquainted with the history of this sad subject, that the allegation of crime was the merest and most groundless pretext that could be offered?—that our slaveholders procured the negroes by means of complicated fraud or of brutal force?—that wars were excited and fomented by them among the African tribes, in order to increase the number of victims for supplying the demands of their barbarous traffic?—that all sorts of circumvention, falsehood, bribery, cruelty, and violence were practised as the ordinary methods of accomplishing their object?—that the very appearance of their ships off the devoted coast spread terror and dismay through the hearts of the whole population, on whom the assault was to be made, that remorselessly severed every tie, and trampled on every charity of our nature, or from whom the unhappy individuals already seized, and bound, and waiting for the hated vessels, were to be torn away for ever, parents from children, and children from parents, husbands from wives, and brothers from sisters, all without the least regard to innocence or guilt?—and that these villainies were perpetrated, not only on those who had done nothing in their own country to deserve such a fate as slavery, even if their punishment had been in-

flicted there, but on a race who had given no offence, and done no injury to the men who, in violation of common justice, and of the law of nations, made incursions into their territory, which should have been secure from such invasion, and carried off its inhabitants to a land of hopeless captivity? But we need not dwell upon this, for our Reverend friend has too much good sense, and too much right feeling, to trace the slavery of the negroes in the West Indies to any evil-deserving on their part, or to any thing that justly brought them into that miserable condition as a punishment for their crimes. And, indeed, he expressly says, that they have been "placed under British domination by the *unprincipled cupidity of our forefathers*." "Our forefathers" is a deceptive phrase; and, in the sense in which Dr. Duncan seems here to use it, has no application to the present stage of our argument; for we are speaking of the negroes, now living as slaves in the West Indies, that were imported from Africa. These have been brought into their existing state of bondage, not by our forefathers, but by ourselves,—that is, by those more immediately engaged in the slave-making and slave-holding concern, and by our own Government, so far as permission of such practices, and protection to those who engage in them, are involved.

Our doctrine, therefore, is, that the slaves, now referred to, have been, under the government of no motive but that of "*unprincipled cupidity*," deprived of that natural right which God himself bestowed upon them, and guarded with the sanction and appointment of his own great authority. And surely if it be the will of God, no matter how that will is made known to us, that personal liberty shall be every man's birthright; and if disobedience or opposition to the will of God is the essence of irreligion; and if our Bible tells us that submission to that will is our grand and paramount duty, "no great effort of reasoning is required to show" that the Bible condemns slavery, and that bondage attaches sin to those who uphold it. The Bible gives no allowance to man to enslave his fellow-men,—far less does it give any allowance to the white men in our colonies to enslave their black brethren; but the Bible all along proceeds on the recognition of man's natural rights, of which personal liberty is one; neither its histories, nor its doctrines, nor its precepts, are intelligible without this recognition of them; unless they are habitually asserted, and practically acknowledged, except where it interposes to modify the use and enjoyment of them, it would not serve the purposes for which it is given; and consequently they who despoil any individual of his liberty, and reduce him to a state of bondage, are just as truly opposing the authority of divine revelation, as if that revelation had expressly prohibited the act by a specific enactment of the decalogue.

We shall take no trouble in exposing the fallacy of those who say that many of the present planters and slave-holders took no active part in reducing the negroes to a state of slavery. This may be true; but it does not at all meet or rebut our argument. Let it be supposed that they have purchased or obtained their slaves after they have passed through the hands of ten proprietors, the case, morally considered, is not in the least degree altered. For, in the *first* place, they have been the buyers or receivers of stolen goods—aggravated by this circumstance, that at the very moment that these came into their offer or their possession, they knew them to be stolen. And we all know that this is as much a sin as the original stealth was, and that refusing to make restitution when that is demanded, only serves to make the sin more hein-

ous and offensive. And, in the *second* place, the essence of the sin of enslaving others, does not consist merely in the act by which they are at first brought into that condition: every successive hour that they are retained in that condition, is just a repetition of the sin. The sin consists in withholding, as well as in taking from them, that which is theirs by natural right, that is, by the will of God: there is not a moment when they may not say to their masters, what title have you to keep us in thralldom? and there is not a moment when we may not answer for their masters, that they have no title but what is derived from physical force, and contradicts the law of him to whom both the parties are subject and responsible.

So much for that portion of the negroes who had been brought from Africa. But there is another and a larger portion of them—we mean the descendants of those who were “placed under British domination by the unprincipled cupidity of our forefathers,” and by “the unprincipled cupidity” of the late and the present generations of such as have had possession of our slave colonies. With regard to them, our argument is, if possible, still more cogent and conclusive. Every human being, wherever he is born, and whatever be the circumstances of his parents, comes into the world with the stamp of liberty upon his nature and his condition—with the charter of freedom in his hand, put there by God, his Maker, himself. This is implied in the doctrine of natural right, and essential to it, in every aspect in which it can be viewed. Now, though the descendants of the negroes who were brought from Africa were in the possession of the slave-holders at the instant that they came into the world, they could not have committed any of those crimes for which it has been pretended in the case of their parents, that slavery was inflicted as a punishment. They did not partake of any of those disqualifications for freedom which it may be alleged adhered to such as, being enslaved in Africa, might be properly continued slaves in the West Indies. And yet as soon as they were born, their birthright was taken from them—they were pronounced to be slaves for life—they were held by the masters who used their parents as property, that they might make merchandise of them like cattle, and treat them in every respect as mere bondsmen—that was done to them, which, on the principle of natural right, was no better than if their breath had been stopped, or they had had their limbs mangled, or had been doomed to perpetual seclusion from the light of the sun.

It will not do here to say, that such is British and colonial *law*. For the makers of such a law did thereby transgress the law of God.—having no more right to enact that the children who are to be born of such and such parents shall be condemned to slavery, than that they shall be condemned to death. And though they were so wicked as to pass such impious enactments, that imposed no obligation on the planters to avail themselves of the opportunity thus granted to them of enslaving the negro children with impunity at the hands of men, and to do what they were no more entitled to do, upon the ground of morality and religion, than Dr. Duncan's parishioners would be to go and murder all the people in their neighbourhood, or all the people on the coasts of South America, because “the unprincipled cupidity” of our ancient or our modern legislators had been pleased to sanction such an enormity. And what renders the matter still worse, such as we have now stated it is the iniquitous law, and such the iniquitous practice, even though the mother, she being a slave, is removed by many degrees from the pure negro species, by the intermixture of her

progenitors with whites, and though the father is the very European, the very Englishman, the very Scotchman, who claims the right of slave property in his own illegitimate offspring! Ah! it is difficult in such a case to prevent or to escape from the "influence of excited feeling;" but the statement needs no such aid, to make it obvious to every sound thinking man, that there is deliberate, undeniable, abominable sin, in despoiling those children of their natural right of liberty—and that, if it be sin to take such right from adults, who may have deserved some punitive visitation for their offences, though it cannot be asserted or proved in the instance under consideration, it is blacker guilt by far to doom to that horrid deprivation, and all its dismal consequences, the poor innocents, who as yet know not the difference between right and wrong, and who have a far better and more inalienable title to their freedom, than the children of the noblest slaveholders in England have to the inheritance of their fathers—the arbitrary statutes of men having conferred the one, while the other is granted by the sovereign appointment and holy law of God.

When we search the Scriptures for the purpose of ascertaining whether they are hostile, or favourable, or tolerant to slavery, we begin our search with the conviction that all men have a natural right to liberty, and that, of course, one man cannot make a slave of another, or keep him a slave, unless he can produce a sanction for so doing from the word of God. This sanction is said to exist in the word of God. We deny it *in toto*; and shall now substantiate our own views by refuting those of our opponents. And, *first*, as to what we find in the *Old Testament*.

No doubt, in the Jewish dispensation, slavery obtained, and was tolerated and practised under the Divine authority. But that dispensation was a Theocracy. The supreme Being chose to take the Israelites under his special management. He had a particular purpose to serve, by his selection of them to be a distinct and peculiar people. And he instituted a great variety of customs, and enacted a great variety of laws and regulations, by which that purpose might be more effectually answered. But as this economy was in all respects suitable to its end and object, and as in many respects its observances and ordinations had no standing, except in so far as it was concerned, so whenever it was abrogated, these ceased to have any use, meaning, or obligation, as part of God's government of the world. Slavery was an usage which we hold to have been in this predicament. It was not enjoined as a thing required by the moral law, and belonging to a permanent code of ethics—applicable to mankind in every age, and in all circumstances. So far as it involved the enslavement of Hebrews by Hebrews, it was purely permissive; and so far as it referred to the enslavement of heathens by Hebrews, if it was not merely permissive but enjoined, this only formed a portion of that vengeance which the Jewish nation was made instrumental in inflicting on the surrounding Gentiles, and by the infliction of which, the wall of distinction between the two was rendered broader, and higher, and more impassable, till the time for reconciliation should arrive. To us, therefore, who are differently situated, and who live in a period when there is no longer the distinction of Jew and Gentile, and who must look to another quarter than the temporary institutions and allowances of the Jewish polity for the government of our conduct, it is no argument, that, because slavery was found among these, therefore slavery may properly and lawfully be permitted to have a place in our practical system. Its mere

existence in that scheme of seclusion, and shadows, and peculiarities, characterised though each and all of them were by the infinite wisdom of Him who appointed them—is no authority for us who are placed in totally different circumstances, and have been privileged with deliverance and freedom from the “yoke of bondage.” The various minute regulations, indeed, with which it was accompanied, furnish a presumptive proof that it is to be considered as having no broader or more permanent foundation, than what was afforded by the evanescent system in which it was allowed to obtain. And, in fact, though some of the advocates of slavery have grounded their defence of it upon its recognition in the Jewish economy, the more judicious of these gentlemen are shy in bringing it prominently forward, or in laying any great stress upon its validity. Nay, our Reverend friend seems quite sensible of its weakness, and therefore hastens from it with great speed to what he thinks the better ground of the *New Testament* dispensation, where we shall meet him by and by; but as certain other combatants in the case think differently, and as in our opinion, the manner in which the subject is actually treated in the *Old Testament*, tends to throw considerable light on the question at issue, we must detain our readers a little longer in that department of our criticism.

If the anti-abolitionists refer to the authority of the *Old Testament*, it behoves them to submit and conform to that authority in all its extent. They must not take as much as suits their own purpose, and treat the remainder as a dead letter. That they should adopt even the whole, safe and consistent as that would comparatively be, we cannot admit; but that they should select nothing but what they think necessary for their partial and selfish ends, and leave the rest behind and neglected, as if it had nothing to do with the case, is a privilege which we must positively and relentlessly withhold from them. It is because slavery was found in a dispensation of divine origin, that they deem themselves sanctioned in keeping slaves. They must not forget, however, that the sanction has conditions and qualifications connected with it, which have the same divine origin, and away from which they cannot detect slavery in the Mosaic institutions. Let them take the sanction, since they so much desire it; only let them not engraft upon it, regulations and practices, to which it does not extend,—from which, on the contrary, it is carefully guarded; but let them receive and make use of it in that modified form which it bears, and with all those accompaniments which are fastened to it, in the Scripture record. And are they prepared to let the slave system of the West Indies be tried by such a test, or made conformable to such a standard? The truth is, that those who are clamorous, and clamorous too on the footing of piety and reverence for the authority of the Bible, dare not abide the application of it to that bondage which they yet try to place under its shelter. Let us see how the fact stands.

The Jewish law as it regarded slavery said, “If a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye’s sake. And if he smite out his man-servant’s tooth, or his maid-servant’s tooth, he shall let him go free for his tooth’s sake.”* Is there in any one of our colonies, either a law or a custom that so protects the poor slave, or affixes to any such injury as is here mentioned, the privilege of immediate manumission? Or may not ten thousand injuries, still more painful and grievous, be inflicted by any master in the West Indies with absolute impunity?

* Exodus xxi. 26, 27.

Again, the Jewish law said* "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant† which is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place where he shall choose, in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him." But in the West Indies, if a slave escapes, even from the most cruel master, so far from being allowed to take refuge, or find shelter under the roof of another, in whose humanity he could confide, he is advertised in the newspapers like a strayed ox, the marks branded upon him with hot metal are described, and when he is caught, he is brought back to suffer tenfold greater misery than that which had compelled him to run away; and if he has had the boldness to harbour with the nearest and dearest of his kindred, this is denounced as an aggravation of his crime!

Again, the Jewish law said, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy; six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work; thou, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant," &c. But in the West Indies, in many parts of it at least, the master has the right to make the slave work on the Lord's day for his master's benefit; he compels him, under the penalty of starvation, to employ that day in cultivating his own provision-grounds, and making market; he thus *de facto* enforces upon him this profanation of the Sabbath, this transgression of the fourth commandment, and does so under the protection of legislatures which thus establish iniquity by a law!

Again, the Jewish law says‡ "If thy brother an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years, then in the seventh year, thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty; thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine-press; of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him." "It shall not seem hard unto thee when thou sendest him away free from thee; for he hath been worth a double hired servant unto thee, in serving thee six years; and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest." But in the West Indies, so far from there being any period fixed at which the slaves may go free, they are bound down by statute to be the property of their masters as long as they live; if at any time he is pleased to manumit them, instead of their getting any thing from *him*, he must be indemnified for parting with *them*; he can, even in the most populous of the colonies, refuse to liberate them at any period, or upon any terms whatever; he possesses them as he possesses his mules and his oxen. Were the single enactment, now quoted from the Jewish law, to be put in force in the West Indies, it would certainly happen that, in the course of seven years from this date, almost§ all the slaves would be emancipated,—not a farthing would be expended on compensation,—and, moreover, the negroes would take along with them, out of their master's stores, what would serve to give them a comfortable outfit at the commencement of their career as freemen. And yet the slave-holders, and their

* Deut. xxiii. 15, 16. † Whether Hebrew or Heathen. ‡ Deut. xv. 12, 13, 14, 18.

§ We have said *almost*, because the slaves that were taken from among the heathen had not the privilege of going free, like the Hebrew slaves, either in the seventh year, or at the jubilee. At the same time it does not appear from the history of the Jews, that they had exercised the power conferred upon them, of buying slaves from their Gentile neighbours to any great extent—which is somewhat strange, considering that it was chiefly from among them that permission to buy slaves was granted.

friends, have the audacity to appeal to the Jewish dispensation in defence of West India bondage !*

It is very true the Jews were allowed to buy slaves of the heathen round about them, and of the strangers that sojourned among them, and these they were warranted to keep as a possession for themselves, and as an inheritance for their children.† But we cannot agree to any such distinction being recognised in the present day. The very difference now alluded to of the treatment given to Hebrew slaves from that given to heathen slaves evinces the peculiarity of the Jewish dispensation, and the absurdity of ever taking it as a model according to which we are to shape our judgments and our conduct in cases like the present. Were such a dispensation at this time existing, our objection would not be valid, and that to which it is made might be maintained. But where are we to look for the Jews as contradistinguished from the heathen, in the British slave colonies ? There is no such contrariety or separation any where upon the face of the earth. The great truth now is, that there is neither Jew nor Gentile ; the middle wall of partition is broken down ; and all nations are on a level in the sight of Jehovah. He has cast off the Jews,—he has called the Gentiles ; no people have come in place of the Jews ; all are brethren ; the very men who would fain turn the ancient economy to their own account, are themselves Gentiles, and those whom they would keep in bondage are exactly the same. Whatever privileges were exclusively confined to the Jews, these, so far as they were intended to be perpetual, are, since the coming of the Messiah, conveyed to the Gentiles ; and the Gentiles are all *brethren*, excepting that so many are acquainted with the Gospel, and so many are still ignorant of it ; but, unlike the Hebrew dispensation, which embraced the Jews only, it comprehends Gentiles as well as Jews, and puts them all upon a level as to their potential share in its blessings. If, therefore, the statutes respecting slavery in the Jewish code are to be quoted at all in support of the West India system, it must be those portions of them which refer to *Hebrew slaves*,—to such of the *brethren* or *peculiar people* as were made bondmen. And we have seen that these are of such a description as, in several essential points, to discountenance and condemn the slavery that prevails in our colonies, and as will very soon, indeed, if faithfully copied and followed, put an end to the abomination which yet they are adduced to uphold. We keep in fast, rigorous, interminable bondage those who are our brethren as Gentiles, or rather as members of the one great family that includes both Jew and Gentiles without any distinction,—nay, those even, of whom there are many that God has enlightened with the knowledge of saving truth, and called by his Spirit into the fellowship of the Gospel, and who, though once barbarians, have been raised by divine mercy above the great majority of that favoured nation, compared to which they were once as outcasts and aliens,—being now “ fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of faith.” And notwithstanding this, there are among us men who can have the boldness to quote the Jewish slavery as a justification of that which exists in our colonial dependencies, and flatter them-

* In connexion with the above, and in reference to the subject of compensation, it is curious to remark that when God brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, not only was no indemnity given to Pharaoh and his people, but, by the divine command, the Israelites spoiled the Egyptians of much wealth, and carried it away with them. This shows to what party compensation is due. Exod. iii. 21, 22, and xii. 35, and 36.

† Levit. xxv. 44, 45, 46.

selves, or try to persuade others, that when they engage in it, and uphold it, and profit by it, they are all the while acting under the sanction of that great and gracious being who, for special purposes, first separated between Jews and Gentiles, and then, having accomplished the purposes in view, melted down these two bodies into one promiscuous community.

In the little that Dr. Duncan has said on the subject of slavery among the Jews, he has committed a mistake in point of fact. Without stopping to ask here what he means by saying, that "the Mosaic law, not only permitted, but sanctioned by express statute, the holding of heathen slaves,"—which we suspect to be another mistake proceeding on the idea that permitting and sanctioning are two different things in this case, as if the word "*shall*" is to be understood as imperative and not merely permissive—without stopping to notice this, we object to his statement that the Mosaic law "allowed the temporary bondage, and, by consent of the party—a consent rendered irrevocable by certain public forms—even the *perpetual* slavery of individuals among the chosen people themselves." Doubtless our author intended by this to insinuate that the Jewish slavery and the West India slavery bore a considerable resemblance. But whoever receives this impression, receives an erroneous one. For the Doctor mentions one most material discrepancy between the two cases, which, of itself, destroys all such resemblance as can be available to his argument. The slave was by law liberated on the seventh year, as we have seen; but if he *chose* to remain in bondage, his master might continue to keep him.* In the West Indies, not only is there no sabbatical year to smile upon the poor negro, but he is never consulted whether he will remain in slavery; his *consent* is neither asked nor obtained. These are points determined not by his wishes, but solely by the master's will. Then, again, the Doctor is wrong in saying that the slavery in this case was *perpetual*: the consent of the servant was irrevocable—but there was not necessarily a *perpetual* servitude. It might be during all the days of the individual—but it might be for a shorter period. The phrase "for ever" had respect to the year of Jubilee. It was to the year of Jubilee that the term of bondage extended. If that occurred at any period of the slave's subsequent life, it restored to him the privilege which he had voluntarily renounced. Is there any jubilee to qualify or to interrupt the "*for ever*" of the West Indies? And it must be added, that while there was a solemn process before the judges when the individual devoted himself to "*perpetual* slavery," one part of the process is evidently intended to affix a stigma to him who had thus preferred bondage to freedom. The nailing of his ear to his master's door was a symbol of his becoming a fixture—but it was a degrading symbol. It carried in it a rebuke to the person, who suffered himself to be so treated, for his abject and servile spirit, and conveyed the sentiment that he who could willingly, and for the sake of mere food and clothing, and other comforts of that kind, sacrifice his liberty even for a period that did not always or necessarily imply perpetuity, had a meanness of soul which deserved to be stigmatized with some signal and significant mark of dishonour. And so far as this can help the West India cause, our opponents are welcome to it.

* Deut. xv. 16, 17. "It shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go from thee (because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee,) then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever."

It appears from the sacred record, that the slaves under the Jewish dispensation were procured in various ways—such as by purchase—in payment of debt—by voluntary devotement. But it is a remarkable and important circumstance, that the eighth commandment of the moral law is made to bear expressly on the acquisition of this species of property. The following enactment occurs,—“He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.”* And again, “If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die, and thou shalt put evil away from among you.”† What would have happened in the West Indies had this precept been obeyed, or put in force, as it ought to have been? The slave system which prevails there never would have had an existence. And what would happen now, were it to be acted upon in its true and full import? Why, the slaves, instead of being subjected to the horrors of *gradualism*, which are not greatly better than those of the middle passage, would be straightway emancipated; and the masters, instead of getting the compensation they so lustily clamour for, would get nothing at all, or something which they would rather be without. The slave property held in the West Indies—there is no denying it—has been obtained by a system of wholesale treachery and plunder. Such of the slaves as have been brought direct from Africa, were literally stolen—nay, they were got by robbery and rapine—for, though we may be told that they were bought, and though it may be true that certain commodities were given in barter for them, or certain monies paid in consideration of them, dishonesty and violence were the great means employed in the acquisition; and the very goods, such as arms, ammunition, ardent spirits, which were given in exchange for the negroes, were intended not more to remunerate the dealer in captive Africans, than to assist in kindling up, and carrying on those internal wars in that ill-fated country by which prisoners were made, and thus a continued supply provided for the slave market—or rather for the gentlemen in our colonies, who, we are told, have committed no sin, and are entitled to full indemnity! And as to the slaves who have descended from these, the moral guilt of their holders is much the same as in the other case, for they have come into the possession of their present masters through a channel polluted with the original sin of the slave trade. It is by a breach of the eighth commandment that the slaves are in their present situation. Their progenitors were stolen. They are part and parcel of the stolen property. They may have been bought—but the title of the buyer is as thoroughly vitiated as was the title of the seller. The holders of them—whether by purchase, or by inheritance, or by whatever other way—have identified themselves with the primary transgressors, and are “filling up the measure of their iniquities.” They are receivers of stolen goods—partakers of other men’s sins—and pursuing the same criminal course of “unprincipled cupidity,” which was begun and exemplified by their predecessors in the slave proprietary. The law of Moses against stealing men, is as applicable to them as it was applicable to the original thieves—on any scheme of morality and religion, except that which is purely Colonial.

And, besides this, we must revert to the principle we formerly advanced—that every man is born into the world, having liberty as one of his natural rights, and no one can deprive him of that

* Exod. xxi. 16.

† Deut. xxiv. 7.

right without opposing the will of God. When by public law, or by individual power, we constitute him a slave, we are guilty of *stealing* him, in the proper sense of that word, as applied to stealing men. It is not that we steal him from his parents, or from his master, or from his friends; but what is worse than all this, we steal him from himself; he is his own by the Divine ordinance; and when we make a slave of him, we steal from him his most sacred, precious, and essential property. Had he no relation upon earth—had he no person who had a farthing's interest in him—and were his enslavement, therefore, to injure none of his fellow-creatures—still, when we take from him his birth-right of liberty, we are guilty of a species of theft the most heinous, and become involved in the guilt of disobeying that law, which says, "Thou shalt not steal," and which God explicitly applied to the stealing of men, and making merchandise of them, and selling them, and we should not forget the penalty and the admonition subjoined to the offence,—“that thief shall die, and thou shalt put evil away from among you.” How, we ask, do the slave-holders in the West Indies relish this use of the Jewish code, to which their advocates have carried us, for a vindication of their conduct? It condemns them to die, and bids us put away from among us the evil thing which has brought upon them the capital punishment. Are they willing to submit to this consequence of their appeal to the Mosaic authorities? O that they were! We should then forgive, so far as it is our prerogative to forgive, their depredations on the rights of their fellow-men and fellow-subjects; and bring a jubilee day to all the miserable and degraded beings whom they have been sacrificing to their “unprincipled cupidity;” and in this way add, according to the language of our Reverend friend, “another glory to those with which Britain has immortalized her name.”

But it is said that, independently of all the circumstances and enactments with which slavery was associated in the Jewish law, yet still slavery was sanctioned by that law, whose author was God, and that it cannot be a sin, because God would neither sanction nor regulate what is sinful. This mode of stating the question is fallacious. It takes for granted what we neither do nor can admit. It overlooks the distinction which essentially subsists between the supreme Creator and the dependent creature. We allow that God regulated slavery—we hold that slavery is a sin—but we deny that God therefore regulated a sin. This may seem to be paradoxical, but it is nevertheless true, and when urged against us by our antagonists, they pervert the real meaning of the statement, and confound one thing with another to gain their object. When we say that slavery is a sin—the import of our proposition is, that when man of his own authority enslaves his brother man, he commits a sin, because he deprives that brother of his natural right, and thus acts unjustly to the individual whom he has robbed of that right, and rebelliously against God who bestowed it. Had the Jews done this, and had God approved of it, he would then have been approving of what we denominate sin, and we must either have retracted our denunciation of slavery, or admitted an inexplicable contradiction in the divine administration. But we do not maintain that slavery is necessarily, and in all circumstances, or as some say, in the abstract, criminal. It is *not* criminal when appointed, or commanded, or sanctioned by the Almighty. He may take back from his creature man whatever he has given him, unless it has been given with the unconditional promise that it would never be recalled; and he cannot take it back in that case, just because

he is a holy God. Man himself, and all that he has, are God's absolute property, and he may dispose of them as he sees proper. As a punishment for wickedness, or to serve more enlarged purposes of his government, he may doom an individual, or a family, or a tribe, or a nation, to slavery, and either leave them to be treated as their task-masters please, or control that treatment by specific regulations. It seemed good to him to deal in this manner with the Jews. He allowed them under certain restrictions to hold even their brethren in bondage, and to take bondmen and bondwomen, with greater latitude, from among the surrounding heathen. But all this while he was acting as sovereign proprietor of those whose liberty he thus abridged—he had a perfect right to reduce them to servitude—it was in the very nature of the thing that he could not possibly be on that account chargeable with iniquity—and to whatever extent this part of his administration was carried, while in itself it was accordant with the strictest principles of justice, his power enabled him, by a compensating process, to remedy every evil that was eventually done, and to fulfil whatever he intended by such dispensations, and by such inflictions. There was here *no sin*, and could be none; and therefore, in regulating the Jewish slavery, he did not regulate sin.

But the case is very different indeed, when man takes it upon him, without any divine commission, and without any warrant from the necessity of executing laws against transgressors, to deprive his brethren of their liberty, and compel them to be his bondmen. He encroaches upon—he takes away, what belongs to another, and what he has no right to encroach upon or to take away. He assumes the prerogative of God. He deals with God's independent creatures as if they were his own. He steals his neighbour's dearest property. He violates what the will of Heaven has made sacred. He gratifies his own ambition—his own caprice—his own avarice, at the expense of those over whom he possesses no legitimate control. He introduces a system, pregnant, even in its simplest form, and when unguarded by a special interposition of providence, with all sorts of oppression and misery. And he acts upon a principle which implies the right to do wrong—of whose operation he himself may become the victim whenever superior power is pleased to pounce upon him—and which, if acted upon generally, as it may, if it be inherently righteous, would secure the mastery over this world's affairs to the worst and basest passions of the human heart. This is the slavery to which we ascribe the character of *sin*. It is sinful in its origin, and sinful in its continuance, and sinful in its effects, and sinful eternally. This is *not* the slavery of the Old Testament, for that was ordained of God, whose right to ordain it was supreme and unquestionable. This is the slavery which law-breaking, God-daring, ignorant or merciless men have presumed to practise, and found advocates to defend. This is a slavery which God has permitted to exist as he has permitted Satan to exist, but has never—no, never “sanctioned;” which he has rebuked and condemned, but not regulated; which may experience the patience and long-suffering of his mercy, but which raises to him the cry of injustice and of blood, and must sooner or later be visited with his avenging wrath. And this is the slavery which is rampant in the West Indies—over which our author, till he can make Christians both of slaves and masters, throws the protection of his pen and of his name—for the lawfulness of which he contends by appealing to the Mosaic economy—and which, because he does not find an “express precept” in Scripture, or a “command of the Most High” condemning it, he would thus inde-

finitely prolong, while others, on precisely the same grounds, and with as much reason and consistency, would never abolish it at all.

The distinction we have now stated settles the whole merits of the precedent drawn for slavery from the Jewish dispensation. Slavery was not sin *there*—but everywhere else, and in all other circumstances it is, and must be sin—great, aggravated, crimson *sin*. The distinction is founded in truth, and may be proved and illustrated by many examples. When the children of Israel went out of Egypt, they borrowed jewels and other precious things of their oppressors, and carried them all away, and kept them as their property. Had they done this of their own accord, it would have been at once denounced by us as a robbery, even though it was but a sort of *quid pro quo*—a requital for the hardships and cruelties under which they had so long groaned. But, when we hear that they did it by the command of God, that which, on the other supposition, we should have accounted a crime, appears in the light of a virtue; for, had it not been done, the Israelites would have been guilty of an act of disobedience to divine authority.—Again, our Saviour caused a fig-tree to wither away, and sent demoniacs into a herd of swine, so that these were drowned in the sea. Had any human being who had no divine warrant, cut down the tree or destroyed the swine, he would have been chargeable with a criminal outrage, and liable to punishment. But Christ was innocent and justifiable in what he did—it had no moral turpitude in it—because it was done under the direct impulse, or by the very hand, of God himself, to whom belonged, by absolute right, both the property that was destroyed, and those to whom that property belonged.—And, to mention no more, supposing that the Israelites had, merely to gratify their revenge, or to extend their dominion, gone out against the Canaanites, and spread havoc and death among that devoted people, we should have loudly condemned them as marauders and murderers. But, however inscrutable the dispensation may be to us, we must maintain, that it was a holy enterprise in which they engaged, because they were expressly enjoined to attack and to exterminate the seven accursed nations; that here, killing was no murder; nay, that the warfare which was waged by the hosts of God's people, could not have been declined by them without defying and opposing the behests of heaven.

Before concluding this part of our discussion, it is important to advert to that displeasure which God manifested towards the oppression inherent in slavery, and the care with which he guarded against it under the Old Testament dispensation, which permitted its existence.

Every one knows the sympathy which God expressed for the Israelites during their bondage in Egypt, the indignation with which he beheld it, the miraculous interposition by which he delivered his people out of it, the vengeance that he poured out upon those who endeavoured to keep them in it. Had we time to expatiate upon this part of the sacred story, we could easily show how very instructive it is to the slave-holders of modern times. But we refer to it simply for the purpose of reminding our readers of the revolting which there was in the Divine mind from a system resembling in its essential features, though in various respects not nearly so cruel and oppressive, as that which prevails in our West India colonies.

When God gave them establishment and ordinances as a peculiar people, he granted them permission to hold slaves; but in every part of his arrangements, in reference to that point, we may observe the jea-

lousy which he exhibited of man's acquiring or keeping property in man. Even though the *heathen* were treated as under a sentence of proscription, and were designated as those from among whom the Hebrews were to get such as, with strict propriety, could be called slaves, yet the Hebrews were not allowed to use any violence in obtaining them—it was only in the way of purchase that they could obtain such as they desired or needed to have—and then, even for that doubly degraded race, he enacted provisions by which their protection was secured, and their manumission made comparatively easy. As to the *Hebrew* slaves, it was rather servitude than bondage to which they were subjected; for at the end of six years they were made free, and might go where they pleased. If they continued longer with their master—their subsequent bondage was voluntary on their part, marked, however, with disgrace, and still limited in its duration—lasting only till the jubilee. There does not seem to have been any needless encroachment on natural right in the servitude imposed: it was awarded either as a punishment for offences, or as a payment of debt; and thus it presupposed some demerit or obligation in the sufferers. And then let the following statute be noticed as illustrative of the care which God took that the innocent should not be placed in bondage. “If thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee, thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondman: But as a hired servant, and as a sojourner shall he be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee. And then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return.”*

Let the reader also think of the many pathetic or indignant addresses in which God calls upon the Israelites to remember them that are in bondage, and not only to treat them with kindness, but to deliver them from their oppressions and their thralldom. “Is not this the fast that I have chosen?” says he by the mouth of Isaiah, “to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”† And when Zedekiah, king of Judah, and his princes and his people, had transgressed the law respecting the release of Hebrew slaves from their servitude at the end of six years, and brought them back into bondage—thus taking it upon themselves to make slaves of those whom God had pronounced to be free—he commanded Jeremiah to prophecy thus,‡ “Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed unto all the kingdoms of the earth.”—“I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant into the hands of their enemies, and into the hands of them that seek their life; and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.”—“Behold I will command, saith the Lord, and cause them (the king of Babylon's army) to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.”

Nothing is clearer to our minds than this, that while God exercised his own sovereignty, as Lord and Ruler of all, in permitting slavery of a

* Levit. xxv. 39. † Is. lviii. 6. ‡ Jer. xxxiv. 17, 20, 22. See the whole chapter.

certain kind, and to a certain extent, under the peculiar dispensation which he vouchsafed to the Jews, even there he prevented all intermeddling with the natural right to liberty, with which he has invested every human being, beyond the limits that he had fixed for answering his own wise and righteous purposes; and that the guilt of assuming the power of taking away that privilege has been demonstrated in the whole history of his peculiar people, from the time that he denounced his wrath and inflicted his judgments upon the Egyptians, who arbitrarily kept them in bondage, to the period that his wrath and his judgments were poured out upon themselves for exercising upon one another the same oppression which they had anciently experienced from Pharaoh and his subjects.

We shall now proceed to the New Testament dispensation, from which Dr. Duncan endeavours to derive more help to his cause than he could expect from the Old. But we must first notice a doctrine, which he seems to take for granted, namely, that nothing can be held sinful but that which is declared to be so by an "express precept" of Scripture, or a "command of the Most High."

We by no means call in question the truth of Presbyter's assertion, that he has always desired "the final emancipation of the Africans, placed by the unprincipled cupidity of our forefathers under British dominion;" but we cannot help considering it as one of the inexplicable phenomena perpetually exhibited by human nature, that an opponent of slavery should publish a book directly calculated, if not to vindicate, at least to perpetuate the system, until the diffusion of knowledge among the oppressed negroes shall enable them to burst their fetters and to avenge the wrongs of outraged humanity. That such will be the close of the mournful tragedy we have not the smallest doubt, if the British government do not take immediate steps for the abolition of our colonial slavery.

The divine patience and long-suffering have been strikingly exemplified in the conduct of God, both to this country and to our West India colonies. For many years ships were annually fitted out for the purpose of dragging the wretched Africans to a strange land, where men, women, and children, without regard to the relation in which they stood to each other, were indiscriminately sold to the highest bidder, and compelled to labour under the blood-stained lash.

There was, however, an alleviation of Britain's guilt; it was long before the subject was brought before the public; and the knowledge of the horrors of the nefarious traffic was confined to those by whom it was conducted, whose feelings were blunted by habit, and their consciences seared by the practice of iniquity, as with a hot iron. Presbyter quotes a letter from the late Dr. Currie of Liverpool, in which he says,

"It is a truth, that in those of my acquaintance who are, and have been, masters of Guineamen, a great majority are men of general fair character."*

This we doubt not is a correct statement of Dr. Currie's opinion, but it is sufficiently vague. We are not informed of the extent of his acquaintance with this class of people, nor does it appear that he had taken much pains to ascertain the influence of the Guinea trade, upon the character of those by whom it was carried on. The passage from which we have quoted a sentence reminds us more of a philosopher the-

orizing in his study, than of one subjecting the question of which he is treating to the test of fact and experience. That some "merchants concerned in the slave trade," and even some masters of Guineamen, were men of "uncommon integrity and kindness of heart," we do not deny, but still, from the known influence of circumstances in forming the character, we cannot for a moment doubt, that in general those who actually inflicted the wrongs of the injured Africans, during the middle passage, were men not over liable to be visited by compunctious feelings.

It is a striking proof of the utter depravity of human nature that there is no species of wickedness to which men are not easily reconciled by custom. The merchants at home, the planters and the masters of Guineamen, were all engaged in a *legal* traffic, so far as the laws of the country were concerned, and this completely satisfied their minds. Besides, they did not at once plunge into the abyss of wickedness. The merchant had served his apprenticeship, had been employed in writing invoices and instructions for those who were commissioned to kidnap or purchase the cargo; he was familiar with the chains and bolts, and other trappings of this diabolical traffic; and by the time he took his seat at the head of the counting-house, he was inured to all the horrors of the system. He had long been accustomed to note in the ledger, under the head of profit and loss, a number of men, women, and children, purchased in Africa, of whom so many were thrown overboard, and so many were found unsaleable; so that by the time he became a partner, he felt no more remorse in fitting out a ship for the purpose of trading in human flesh, than he would have done in sending her to catch whales or seals.

The captain, too, had been trained under the orders of his superior, to perpetrate the cruelties which were necessarily connected with the business in which he was engaged; and by the time he succeeded to the command, his heart was steeled against the sufferings of the wretched blacks, which to him appeared unavoidable. The planter had also passed through a novitiate. He had been accustomed to witness or to inflict on his fellow-creatures the sufferings inseparable from their degraded situation, and the result of the whole was, that the wretched negro, from his capture till he was laid in the grave, was treated worse than the beasts that perish.

But it is unnecessary to dwell on the horrors of the slave-trade. With Presbyter we rejoice in its abolition, although we cannot unite with him in celebrating the "glory" which Britain has achieved. It is the glory which a troop of banditti achieve when they "retire from business," and live in society: and while the British government tolerates the continuance of slavery in the colonies, Britain resembles the banditti who enjoy in retirement the spoils of their victims; and so long will she be exposed to that righteous retribution which the Judge of all the earth has connected with rapine and injustice.

A gift, says the Scripture, doth blind the eyes of the wise, and the truth of the maxim is daily exemplified. Blinded by self-interest, men put good for evil, and evil for good. Under this influence they are unable to perceive what is most plain and palpable. The same effects, although in an inferior degree, are produced by the prevalence of an erroneous bias on any subject. It may have originated from various causes, some of them too subtle to be detected, but it effectually blinds the judgment and neutralizes those principles to which it is opposed. Of this our author forms an example. In principle, he is steadily opposed to slavery, but he earnestly deprecates the interference of government between the

slaves and their masters. He maintains that the amelioration of the state of the negroes and their final emancipation must be effected by the colonists, although the experience of fifty years has demonstrated, that, if left to them, slavery must be perpetual, or at least that it can only be put an end to by their extermination. Such a catastrophe may be nearer than we anticipate, and we maintain that those who, like Presbyter, endeavour to prevent the active interference of government are the worst friends of the colonists. The planters are labouring under a disease superinduced by their circumstances: by the nature of the malady they are indisposed to use the only means which can prevent its fatal termination; and yet Presbyter insists that they should be left to themselves.

We also hold that those who employ their influence to prevent the interference of government in behalf of the negroes, are not promoting the true interests of this country. The slavery in our colonies is a cancer, at present confined in a great measure to the extremities of the body politic; but there is no saying how soon it may reach the vitals of the empire. In the righteous judgment of God, a spirit of universal insubordination may avenge the cruel bondage in which Britain has so long held the slaves in her colonies.

While our author is so tender towards the present race of colonists, he admits the savage treatment which the negroes formerly experienced, for which, however, he accounts by the necessity under which the masters were laid to consult their own safety. Evil of every kind is prolific, it almost inevitably leads to greater abominations, and thus do transgressors receive the recompense of their error which is meet, till they are judicially given up to a reprobate mind. The colonists having violated the first principles of justice in enslaving the negroes, were compelled to rule them with "a rod of iron." "It is not, I fear," says Presbyter, "too much to say, that they were treated with less humanity than if they had been mere beasts of burden." It appears that the cruelty of the planters received its reward in themselves being completely brutalized, for he tells us, that "there was a deliberate plan" to exclude (the slaves) from all the lights of civilization, and from all participation in the hopes of Christianity, p. 35; "few negro children were then reared," and Presbyter intimates that this was because "the waste of negro life could be supplied more cheaply and rapidly than by the process of rearing from the birth." Such is the picture drawn by our author of the character of the colonists previous to the abolition of the slave-trade, and it is to the successors of these men, placed in precisely the same circumstances, with the exception of not having an opportunity of purchasing a fresh supply of slaves, that he would commit the wretched negroes. He exclaims, "Shall the mother country interfere? God forbid!" p. 94.

The dark picture of former days is employed by our author to exhibit to greater advantage the new era which has commenced. The black population are protected and cherished, the health of the negroes, and the rearing of children are attended to, marriage is encouraged, punishments are more rare and less cruel, and "a council of protection was appointed to attend to the complaints of the slaves, by which the tyranny of masters and subordinate agents was materially restrained," p. 36. "But," says our author, "animated by the scene which his imagination had created,

"It is not to the mere bodily comfort of the negroes that the attention of their masters has been turned. A no less extraordinary change has taken place in regard to their moral and religious welfare."

In reading this part of the work, we were reminded of the question put by a gentleman who had been strongly excited by the accounts given of the state of the continent by the agents of the British and Foreign Bible Society; he inquired whether his friend did not think the millennium had commenced.

Certainly a considerable change for the better has taken place in the colonies, and we do not altogether exclude the enhancement of the value of the slaves by the abolition of the slave-trade as a cause of the amelioration. But this has only been a secondary cause. The change has principally resulted from the attention of Britain to the state of the wretched slaves, in consequence of the discussions in regard to the slave trade. To this we may add the increased number of missionaries, by whose labours the little leaven which shall yet leaven the whole lump has been introduced. The attention of many of that injured race has been directed to the truth as it is in Jesus. Some have been turned to God, and the conduct of others has been considerably influenced by hearing the gospel. But generally speaking, this has not been owing to any regard of their masters "to their moral and religious welfare." That there are individual planters who encourage the instruction of their slaves in the doctrine of Christ we are happy to admit, but they bear a very small proportion to those who, convinced that the system of slavery prevalent in our colonies is inconsistent with the moral elevation of the slaves, are anxious to retain them in ignorance. Hence, the opposition which the missionaries have met with under the cloak of zeal for the established church. Hence their imprisonments and persecutions to the death, and hence the necessity of the interference of his Majesty by disallowing laws passed by the colonial legislatures, which would have had the effect of putting a stop in a great measure to the religious instruction of slaves.

And yet *Presbyter* would leave the negroes in the hands of the planters to be prepared for liberty by *their* efforts! He informs us that the health of the negroes, as well as the rearing of children, is now attended to; but it is a notorious fact that their number is decreasing, which affords a demonstration of the oppression under which they labour. The population of Hayti is rapidly advancing, and so would the negro population of our colonies, were it not for their cruel bondage. Marriage, we are told, is encouraged; but what is the marriage of a slave who is the absolute property of his master—a part of his goods and chattels! When it was proposed by government that the marriages of slaves shall be "to all intents and purposes binding, valid, and effectual in law," the planters of Demerara remarked that "the civil rights acquired by marriage were so numerous and complicated that it is found impracticable to adopt or modify this expression;" they, therefore, proposed the following clause,

"Provided always that such marriages shall in no manner confer on the slaves any of those civil rights which, by marriage, are acquired by persons of free condition, nor subject slaves to any penal infliction, the effects of which might destroy the rights, or injure the property of their masters."

The idea of marriage where slaves are the absolute property of their masters, liable to be seized and sold for his debts, is absurd.* It confers

* When it was proposed in December 1826 in the Assembly of Jamaica, "that it shall not be lawful in cases of sale to separate married people from each other, or from their issue if under ten years of age, provided the parties belong to the same owner," the proposal was rejected. One member observed, that it would be very hard upon a man who

no right, it gives no security, it affords no benefit, and thus the ordinance of God is made void "by the unprincipled cupidity" of those who, in violation of the most sacred rights of humanity, retain their fellow-creatures in a situation which places them on a level with the beasts of the field.

Punishments may have become "more rare," but it is chiefly owing to the attention of this country being directed to what is passing in the colonies.* The planters are aware that they cannot indulge their furious passions to the same extent as formerly; their legislatures have been compelled to pass various acts which set bounds to the punishments inflicted, and although many of them, according to a common and significant observation, are "*made for England*," yet probably they have produced some effect; but the *authenticated* accounts of outrages at which humanity shudders, sufficiently demonstrate that if there be an amelioration in regard to punishments, it proceeds not so much from the protection afforded by colonial usage, as from the knowledge that any uncommon act of cruelty may not only subject the perpetrators to the cognizance of his majesty's government, but render them infamous in this country.

The security of the slaves from arbitrary and undeserved punishments, is illustrated by a circumstance mentioned by Presbyter, page 128. Because a slave would not consent to give up attending a Methodist Chapel, and persuade his fellow-slaves to do the same, he was sent to a workhouse proverbial for the severity of its punishments, where he remained from June to September. In a few weeks he became so ill that his chains were taken off, and he was placed in the hospital, where his life was despaired of. His wife besought the missionary to interfere in behalf of her "murdered husband." Not being allowed by his instructions to intermeddle, he wrote a letter, stating the case to the Editors of the "*Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*," conducted by free persons of colour, with a boldness and ability which argues well for the cause of freedom. It at once shows the progress which the principles of humanity and an acquaintance with the natural rights of mankind have made, and will, we have no doubt, be a powerful engine to accelerate their progress. The letter was published, and the offender severely censured in an able article written by the Editor. In a few days the sufferer was liberated, but so cut up with flogging that he appeared to be dying. For several weeks he was confined to bed, and obliged to lie on his stomach day and night, his "back being a mass of corruption."

owed a small sum of £.50 to have a whole family sold by the marshal. Another said, "that it would be violating the rights of property to dictate to the master how he should dispose of it; he had a *right* to sell one or more of his slaves, according to his wants and inclinations, in the same way as he had to dispose of any other property. The clause, therefore, he considered as an invasion of property."—*Royal Gazette of Jamaica, Dec. 1826.*

* In a despatch of Sir George Murray's, dated 2d September 1829, referring to a statement of the Protector in Demerara, that the complaints of the slaves had not been numerous, Sir George observes, "Unfortunately, however, the same statement cannot be made respecting the number of punishments. They amount to the extraordinary number of 10,207, during one half year, upon a population of 61,626. The infrequency of complaints under such circumstances, must either imply a great consciousness of criminality on the part of the slave, or some distrust of their prospect of redress for any injuries they may have received. In either case the result is much to be lamented."

"In a note our author informs us, that the only answer Mr. Betty has yet given to the communication of government on this most painful subject is, in substance, that he was entitled to punish his slave for insolence and disobedience of orders, that he acted according to law, and that none—not even government itself had a right to interfere."

This answer to a communication of government speaks volumes on the situation of the slaves in the colonies. A planter—a magistrate, *contrary to law*, requires a slave to absent himself from a place of worship, where in the knowledge of Christ crucified he had found an antidote to his misery. The magistrate, who is also attorney of the estate, not satisfied with the negro's bodily labour, insists on his also offering his soul on the bloody altar of West India slavery, and not only so, but that he should use his influence with his fellow-slaves to withdraw them from hearing the gospel. He respectfully declines, is sent to a workhouse, flogged and kept in chains till he appears to be dying, and is dismissed at the end of four months so grievously mangled that his life is despaired of, and his back in such a state that for weeks he can only lie on his stomach. When by orders of the government at home the case is inquired into, his master replies, that he did no more than he was entitled to do, and that government have no right to interfere between him and his slave; and what does Presbyter say to this atrocious and disgraceful proceeding? Is it possible for him to repress his indignation? can he any longer endure the idea of 800,000 human beings exposed to such unheard of cruelty and injustice? Yes; he is so much convinced of the danger of the mind being roused and inflamed by the first consideration of the facts as to preclude "all prudential reasoning and cool deliberation." He is so satisfied that "it is not under the exaggerating influence of excited feeling that any political question, and much less such a question as this, can be wisely determined," that he thus concludes his note recording Mr. Betty's vindication of his unprincipled conduct and his setting government at defiance,—“This may be spirited, but is not satisfactory.” O most lame and impotent conclusion! Yes, it is “spirited,” it is the concentrated *spirit* of evil; it is the very essence of the brutalizing effects of West India slavery on the planters; it is a frightful specimen of that depravity which leads men to glory in their shame.

But in regard to punishments, we do not dwell on particular instances; we appeal to the state of feeling among the planters, as a proof that it is adding insult to injury to talk of leaving the interests of the negroes, and their preparation for freedom by progressive improvement, in the hands of their taskmasters. The inhuman and diabolical conduct of Mr. and Mrs. Moss in the Bahamas, issued in the death of a female slave. A bill of indictment for murder was preferred against them by the attorney-general, which, however, was “not found” by the grand jury. Two bills for misdemeanors were then prepared. The culprits were tried and sentenced to fine and imprisonment; but so venial was their offence deemed, that the most respectable people in the Island visited them in their confinement, and the governor proposed to the government at home that they should be liberated. This was most properly refused, and when the blood of the murdered negress and all her pitiable, protracted, and unutterable sufferings were expiated, according to the decision of colonial justice, by an imprisonment of four months, and a fine of L.300, the day of the liberation of the Mosses was a kind of holiday in the Island; a public entertainment was given them; and thus they were taught that whatever

might be said of them at home, they enjoyed the sympathy and unaltered esteem of their fellow slave-holders!

But Presbyter informs us, that councils of protection are appointed. When the establishment of a protector of slaves was proposed in Jamaica, it was rejected, on the pretence that the local magistracy and the vestry of each parish, in other words, the owners and managers of slaves, constituted by law a council of protection. This, it has been observed, is like "constituting the wolf the guardian and protector of the lamb." Such councils of protection, however, were formed in the different districts of the island; their efficacy has been ascertained, and, as might have been anticipated, they have proved more prejudicial than beneficial to the negroes. They hold out a delusive prospect of redress; the wretched slaves grasp at the shadow, and, if they are not punished for complaining, which is very common, they are sent back to their owner, to expiate by additional sufferings their having dared to appeal from his paramount authority. The value of these councils is illustrated by a case which lately occurred. The slave of the Rev. Mr. Bridges had roasted a turkey on the wrong day; she was summoned into his presence, and questioned on the subject. Knowing with whom she had to do, she offered to buy a turkey; he rejected the offer, and proceeded to beat and kick her. He then ordered her to be severely flogged. The case was brought before the council of protection; witnesses were examined, whose testimony fully established his guilt, but thirteen out of seventeen voted for his acquittal, and only four for his conviction. The facts were transmitted to England; orders were sent to the governor to inquire into the case. He endeavoured to evade compliance; but at last it was referred to the attorney-general of the colony, who advised that an immediate prosecution be commenced against Mr. Bridges. So much for the councils of protection to which our author refers.

Yet even the councils of protection, "ironically so named," will not be in vain.* However unjust in their proceedings, they show the poor slaves that their situation is not overlooked in Britain—that their masters, blinded by their circumstances, may do all in their power to retain them in the abasement and degradation of their present situation; but that still there is a land, the touch of whose soil not only melts the negro's chains, but whose mandate can reach him in the West Indies, and bid the oppressed go free. They see that preparations are making for doing them this tardy justice. They well know that the laws passed in their favour, defective as they are, do not emanate from their masters. They look for the arrival of the packet from England; reports are spread that orders have arrived for sounding the jubilee trumpet, and, although disappointed, they cherish the hope that the boon will yet be granted.

These are symptoms of progressive improvement, and a pledge of its advancement. Those who think with Presbyter, will conceive that such feelings among the negroes are fraught with danger. We admit it; but such is the fact; and were it not that we believe the planters

* In a document presented to parliament, 10th March 1831, a case of grievous oppression of a female slave is recorded, together with the measures adopted by Mr. Taylor, the attorney of the estate to which she belonged, to obtain redress. "Every effort," says Mr. Taylor, "was abortive." He adds, "The strong impression made on my mind is, that councils of protection are a mockery, and that so long as slave evidence is rejected by the law, the slave has scarcely the shadow of protection from ill treatment."—*Anti-Slavery Reporter*, vol. iv. p. 319.

to be so infatuated, that they are incapable of appreciating their danger, we would call on them to mark the signs of the times, and in good earnest to prepare for what must very shortly take place. We deprecate the destruction of slavery by the rising of the slaves. The heart sickens at the thoughts of massacre and bloodshed with which it must necessarily be attended ; but such a catastrophe appears inevitable, unless effectual measures shall speedily be taken by government for breaking the bands of wickedness. It ought to be the prayer of the people of God, that, in his goodness, he would grant that the effects of the slave trade may be got rid of by a great act of national justice, and that its horrors may not be avenged on the land by which it was sanctioned, or by the destruction of those who were the more immediate agents of the demon of slavery. When we contemplate the general feeling in this country, that the slaves are entitled to freedom—when we observe successive administrations united in opinion on the subject, our hopes are elevated. But when we see the determined opposition of the colonial legislatures, and, above all, when we reflect that there is a God who hears the groaning of the captive, and who has said, “vengeance is mine,” and “be sure your sin will find you out,” we cannot but dread that the wrongs of injured Africa will be required of Britain—that she will not, by a legislative enactment, get free of that nefarious system, which she has so long upheld, but that God’s abhorrence of her conduct will be recorded in characters of blood.

We entirely dissent from Presbyter’s proposal of non-interference, and leaving the amelioration of the negroes to the regulation of the planters.* It is chiefly owing to the interference of this country that some progress has been made—that education is dawning on the negroes—and that the gospel has been preached to so many. The planters possessed too much of this world’s wisdom not to know that their slaves could not be treated like beasts, unless they were kept in brutish ignorance. They were aware that the religion of Jesus is calculated to raise them to the level of human beings. A very few years ago it was publicly announced in one of our colonies, that slavery was inconsistent with Christianizing the slaves ; and what was the conclusion ? Not that slavery should be abolished, but that Christianity should not be taught !

“Can you,” said the *Demerara Gazette*, “make your negroes Christians, and use the words ‘dear brother’ or ‘sister’ to those you hold in bondage ?”—“They would conceive themselves by possibility put on a level with yourselves, and the chains of slavery would be broken.”

Nothing can be more true ; Christianity is the safeguard of society, in which there must of necessity be a gradation of ranks, but it teaches the brother of low degree to rejoice in that he is exalted, and the rich in that he is brought low, for he is constantly reminded that the transient distinction which he possesses will soon be at an end, and therefore, the religion of Jesus is necessarily destructive, so far as its influence extends, of a state of society in which men originally created in the image of God are degraded to the condition of brutes.

It may be said, the case of Demerara is a solitary instance. Did not the Jamaica Colonial Legislation pass an act in 1696, by which it was

* “Have a care,” said Mr. Canning, “how you leave to the owners of slaves the task of making laws against slavery. While human nature remains the same, they never can be trusted with it.”

declared, that every slave should be educated and receive instruction in the Christian religion? Yes, and they have of late renewed this act, while they have at the same time confessed, what was indeed too palpable to be denied, that it never had been carried into execution, and we may safely add, if left to the planters, it never will.

This does not imply that the planters are naturally more destitute of humanity than others, but they have been placed in circumstances very unfavourable for its development. They have long beheld those who differed from them in colour debased and degraded, and they have naturally come to view them as an inferior race, whose service they are entitled to command. No man acquainted with his own heart would wish to trust himself in such a situation. The planters have long lived in a land, where men made after the similitude of God have been dishonoured and trampled on, where they have been roused from slumber by the sound of the cart whip, and urged to labour under a burning sun, by the agonies it inflicts; and their oppressors have received the meet recompense of their conduct, by having become insensible to the misery of their victims; and because the people of this country reprobate such a system, because they loudly demand *justice* for the suffering slave, because they indignantly repel the apologies made for such unheard of cruelty, they are accused of not treating the West India proprietors "with the tenderness and Christian feeling which their circumstances require," of not making "proper allowances" for their natural prejudices, "of hunting them down like beasts of prey," of their not being "calmly approached with the influences of reason and religion," and of not setting before them "arguments of duty, of humanity, and of enlightened interest."*

We do not charge Presbyterian with being a friend to colonial slavery; this he disclaims; he is desirous of the final emancipation of the Africans, but we do not envy him the calmness with which he views the subject, nor his excessive sympathy with the feelings and interests of the planters, which appears to have swallowed up his pity for the suffering slaves. He characterises the delusive and unfounded representations given by one who has grown grey in passing through "all the gradations of a planter's life," as "very judicious," as being written "with some natural softening perhaps, but, upon the whole, with a moderation and good feeling which reflect credit on his character, and give weight to his statements,"—as "highly appropriate, though probably"—"somewhat too favourable;" while in a passage to which we formerly adverted, he represents the statements of the opponent of slavery as having "such a mixture of truth in his glowing words, as serves to conceal their exaggerations," while it is notorious that the advocates of emancipation have in general been peculiarly careful in substantiating the facts to which they appealed.

In condemning his system of non-interference, in placing all our expectations of the deliverance of the slaves, except by a successful rebellion, in the authority of the British government, we are borne out by proofs not easily resisted:—

1st, The known principles of human nature forbid us to expect that the planters will cordially undertake the task of giving liberty to their slaves. There is no principle in fallen man more powerful than pride, and there is nothing which men will not sacrifice to be raised above their fellows. We naturally pique ourselves on any real or supposed advan-

tage, and are exceedingly jealous of whatever threatens to deprive us of the superiority which it affords. Connected with our self-complacency is a disposition to despise our inferiors. A child who to-day learns something of which he was ignorant, will to-morrow look down with contempt on his fellow for ignorance on the subject. The Scribes and Pharisees, elated by their acquaintance with the traditions of their fathers, regarded the common people with sovereign contempt. We are taught by the experience of all ages that nothing is so highly valued as power over others, and that those who possess it never part with it willingly. Now, considering the unlimited power which the planters have over their slaves, and that the continued exercise of this power is, in their minds, so essential to their interest, how can we expect that they should give it up of their own accord? We do not transfer "the iniquities of the *system* to the character of those whom circumstances, frequently not of their own choosing, have mixed up with it;" but we maintain that their being mixed up with the system incapacitates them for being judges in the case. We may calmly set before them "arguments of duty, of humanity, and of enlightened interest," and our arguments may unanswerably prove that eventually the state of the colonies will be improved by the emancipation of the negroes; that free labour is cheaper than the labour of slaves, and that the estates will rise in value. These arguments of "enlightened interest" might be successful in this country, where men are at home surrounded with their children who are to succeed them, but it is not so in the colonies. The resident proprietors are anxious to get away, and however conclusive our arguments may be as to the ultimate increase of the value of West India property by emancipation, there *may* be loss in the transition from the old to the new system. It will doubtless interfere with many individual schemes and speculations by which the God of this world is blinding men's minds and turning them from the thoughts of eternity. This, aided by the disposition to prefer the present to the future, will effectually prevent the great body of the planters from ever co-operating in the abolition of slavery, and still more from carrying it forward without the active interference of government.

2d, There is another thing in the state of the colonies which not only incalculably aggravates the sufferings of the slaves, but which renders all hopes of emancipation illusory if left to the planters.

A great proportion of the property in the colonies is mortgaged to merchants in this country, who have no prospect of recovering the money which they have advanced except by the annual consignments made to them. They naturally look to the amount of the consignment, and provided this be considerable, all is right. They hear not the sound of the cart-whip, nor the groans of those by whose labours they are profiting. The attorney must recommend himself to his employer by the quantity of produce which he ships; and although to him the sound of the lash is familiar, although he hears the groans and sees the blood of the wretched negro, his heart is hardened by habit, and self-interest; and the remorse which he might otherwise feel, is checked by the consideration that he is only doing his duty. He is sorry it should be necessary to use such severe measures, but he cannot help it.

The proprietors of many of the estates which are not mortgaged reside in this country. They look to their attorneys and managers for the means of supporting their rank in life, and along with their remittances they receive flattering accounts of the happiness of the slaves, and are told

of the misery in which freedom could not fail to involve them, while the natural jealousy of any change which might affect their interest powerfully disposes them to subscribe to such doctrine. If to all this we add the state of property in the West Indies, where things seem verging to universal bankruptcy, we may judge of the wisdom which deprecates the interference of government, and would leave the business of emancipation in the hands of the residents, while we make ourselves their laughing-stock by calmly approaching them "with the influences of reason and religion," and setting before them "arguments of duty, of humanity, and enlightened interest."

3d, 'The experience of the conduct of the colonists during the last fifty years, places beyond a doubt—what might be anticipated from the character of our nature, and the circumstances in which they are placed,—that they will continue decidedly hostile to emancipation.

When the abolition of the slave trade was agitated, what reception did the proposal meet with in the colonies? No degree of vituperation was spared against the advocates of the measure. Every species of misrepresentation was resorted to for the purpose of blinding the public mind. It would ruin the shipping interest: a great capital had been embarked in the trade on the faith of the protection of government, and if this were withdrawn, ample compensation must be made. It would also ruin the colonies; to supply the waste of life by rearing children was out of the question. Then, again, were the friends of humanity aware what they were doing? Were it not for the slave-trade, all the prisoners taken in the wars of Africa would be butchered without mercy: and those who valued religion should pause before they united against a system by which so many negroes were brought to a place where they might be converted to the faith of Christ.

The horrors of the middle passage were converted into scenes of amusement and rejoicing. The negroes being stowed together in a state of suffocation in the hold of a slave-ship, was described as their being "comfortably lodged in rooms fitted up for them." The bringing up the wretched captives on deck, and making them jump about for exercise on pain of the lash, was represented as their dancing for very joy and gladness of heart. In short, every contrivance which ingenuity could devise, or falsehood support, was characteristically resorted to in favour of the continuance of the slave-trade. Nor was all this in vain; for many long years the horrid traffic was continued. At length it shrunk from the light which had discovered its unutterable abominations. And where are all the dreadful consequences of the abolition so confidently predicted? Even the colonists now join in characterising it as most nefarious, and acknowledge that instead of sustaining loss, they have been benefited by its termination. But when would they have terminated it? When would the colonial legislatures have voted for its abolition? We may safely answer, NEVER.

For some years past the question has been emancipation; and precisely the same means have been resorted to in order to prolong colonial slavery. The slaves in the West Indies are better off, we are told, than the poor at home. But which of the poor in this country would exchange situations with a negro? Supposing, what is very far from being the case, that the slaves in the colonies are in more comfortable external circumstances than the free labourers at home, what would it prove? Go into a cabin; see the half-naked children sitting with their parents at a scanty meal, while the roof very imperfectly keeps out the rain.

Then go to a nobleman's stables ; see his horses sumptuously lodged, well fed, and led out to their daily exercise. It may be said that the horses are better off than the inmates of the cabin. But it would be treason against human nature to compare the poor man and the horse, and it is a species of treason to compare the situation of a wretched slave, a part of the goods and chattels of his master, with a man who, amidst his poverty, stands erect in conscious freedom, and who knows that none can deprive him of the fruits of his industry.

The approbation which *Presbyter's* letters have experienced from the abettors of colonial slavery, proves how much his sentiments and theirs coincide. None of them affirm that slavery must be perpetual. They only tell us the time is not come ; leave the matter in the hands of the planters, and at a future period the minds of the slaves may be prepared for the change. Thus they endeavour "to gain the time;" and the friends of emancipation ought to recollect, that the longer the subject is before the public, without any active measures being adopted, the more callous will men become. This the planters well know, and they will continue to make laws "*for England*," and they will administer them *for the colonies*. Now, we complain of *Presbyter* for defending the policy which the abettors of colonial slavery are pursuing, and giving large extracts from works written by the advocates of colonial slavery, although the work of Mr. Barclay has been proved to be undeserving of credit. No wonder that *Presbyter* should be suspected of being friendly to the cause of slavery. He deprecates interference with the planters, he praises the publications of the colonists, and, as might be expected, his own work is lauded and circulated by the most determined enemies of emancipation.

In the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, *Presbyter* might have found ample proof how little credit is due to Mr. Barclay on the subject of colonial slavery.* Indeed he must be "a sturdy moralist" who could resist the influence of twenty-one years' residence in the West Indies, during which he "went through all the gradations of a planter's life, from the situation of a book-keeper to that of a manager, if not a proprietor."

Our author observes that the very name of slavery is happily "abhorrent to the inhabitants of this free and Christian land," yet he regards the question at issue as political. In his second letter, however, which is the shortest of the series, he endeavours to prove that slavery is not prohibited by revelation. Why, then, is the name of slavery abhorrent to the inhabitants of a Christian land ? Christians derive their religion from revelation ; and if an abhorrence of slavery is an effect of Christianity, revelation must condemn slavery. Our author observes, p. 125,

"It is by no means meant to assert that, because Scripture has not condemned slavery by express precept, it is therefore a condition, the principle of which Christianity sanctions and approves."

If Christianity does not sanction and approve slavery, how can Christians presume to vindicate holding their fellow-creatures in bondage?

* "A careful perusal of Mr. Barclay's work having satisfied us, that, from beginning to end, it was a mere tissue of misstatement and misrepresentation ; we took occasion, in our *Reporter*, No. 18, (p. 250, &c.) to expose some of its dishonesties to the public ; and we challenged those who represented it as deserving of confidence, to select any single instance in which they thought that Mr. Barclay had succeeded in refuting the positions of Mr. Stephen, and we should engage to show that his pretended refutation was an utter and palpable failure. 'The challenge was declined.'—*Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, vol. 2d, p. 396.

It will not do to reply, they are not fit for liberty, for certainly a very short time might suffice to render them fit for what is the natural condition of man, and assuredly there is no necessity for children being made slaves on the plea of their unfitness; for the period of childhood affords an opportunity of educating a child for any situation; there can be no necessity, therefore, for retaining them in a situation which Christianity does not sanction.

Presbyter observes that there is no direct precept in the word of God, declaring slavery unlawful.

"Could a positive command be shewn, forbidding Christians to hold a man in slavery, nothing could countervail the duty of immediate emancipation. No consideration of expediency, either with reference to the master or the slave, could for a moment be listened to. A divine mandate is peremptory and exclusive, and the sentence of religion would be '*Piat justitia ruat coelum.*'" P. 126.

If God had so constituted the human mind that we could only learn his will on any subject by a positive precept, revelation would have presented a very different appearance. But God has given us power to judge, compare, and reason from established principles with as great certainty that we are in the path of duty, as when we have a positive precept; and it is always a very suspicious circumstance when we are constrained to shelter ourselves on any subject, and especially on a great moral question, such as slavery, by alleging that we have no express precept. It resembles the conduct of the Jews in regard to our Lord. They complained that he did not tell them *plainly* that he was the Christ. Their complaint proceeded exactly on the same ground as that of the want of a positive precept against slavery. They had "no cloak for their sin" in rejecting him. But they attempted to weave one by alleging that he did not speak plainly. Their unbelief proceeded from their opposition to his doctrine; and he told them that the discernment which they discovered in natural things would condemn them for their moral blindness. "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" The evidence of our Lord's being the Christ, was overwhelming, but the prejudices of the Jews in favour of a temporal kingdom were so strong that no evidence could satisfy them; they apologised, however, for their unbelief by alleging, that since he did not tell them *plainly*, there was room for "reasoning and conclusions;" and, as might be expected, the issue of their reasoning was the conclusion that Jesus was a deceiver.

"Slavery only becomes sinful when it is inconsistent with the temporal or spiritual welfare of the bondman. To this, however, a Christian master is bound to look; for here religion steps in with its imperative command and its awful sanctions." P. 126.

Does Presbyter then suppose that God has sanctioned the principle, that a man may retain his fellow-creature in slavery till he sees it to be "inconsistent with the temporal or spiritual welfare of the bondman?" This would, indeed, perpetuate slavery; it reduces it to a matter of opinion, on which men will speculate according to their interest and prejudices. Mr. Betty, the Jamaica magistrate, was doubtless convinced that it was his duty to imprison and flog Henry Williams till his life was despaired of, for his temporal and spiritual welfare. Doubtless, he thought Williams would learn nothing good from the methodists; that their doctrine would be hurtful both to his soul and body; and that, as "a Christian master is bound carefully to look" to the temporal and spiritual welfare of his bondman, it was his duty to act as he did. The Roman Catholic holds that there is no salvation without the pale of his

church, and according to this principle is bound by the "imperative command" and "awful sanctions" of religion to prevent his slave from listening to the Gospel of Christ.

The defenders of the slave-trade argued for its continuance, because they affirmed that it was for the welfare of the Africans; and had we waited till the merchants, the planters, and the captains of Guineamen were convinced that the trade was "inconsistent with the temporal or spiritual welfare of the bondman," it would have continued to this day.

The admission of Presbyter that slavery "becomes sinful when it is inconsistent with the temporal and spiritual welfare of the bondman" is, however, very important, and nothing more is necessary to decide the question at issue. Can it be held for a moment by any rational being that West India slavery is not inconsistent with the slave's temporal welfare? Is it for his welfare to be the absolute property of his master; to be driven to his work with the cart-whip; to be stripped and flogged, or to see his wife or daughter stripped and flogged, in violation of humanity and decency; to be liable to be separated from his family, besides all the other miseries of his degraded state? That this is not inconsistent with his temporal welfare can only be maintained on the principle of the Stoics, that a man should be indifferent to pleasure or pain.

And in regard to the bondman's spiritual welfare, it is evident that colonial slavery is peculiarly unfavourable. There may be Christian masters, who, knowing the value of their own souls, will care for the souls of their slaves; but Christ's flock is a little flock, and the number of such masters bears a very small proportion to those who are not Christians. The natural opposition against real religion is recorded in every page of Scripture, and therefore we must expect that, with few exceptions, masters will oppose the introduction of Christ's religion among their slaves. Thus a double barrier is placed in the way of the bondman. 1st, His own love of darkness, and hatred of light. 2d, The blindness and ignorance of his master, disposing him to uphold the kingdom of the god of this world, whose he is, and whom he serves. To this we may add the pride of the human heart, and its impatience of seeing an inferior act for himself, especially if he adopts principles which, by their strictness, condemn the laxity of his superior. Thus we see that colonial slavery is palpably inconsistent both with the bondman's temporal and spiritual welfare.

Our author is desirous of gradual emancipation, but it is evident that upon the present system the progress of the slaves must be very slow. He admits "that slavery can seldom be favourable to the temporal and spiritual welfare of a human being; perpetual slavery, in the extended sense of that term, *never*."* On the principle of gradual emancipation, the slavery of the present generation must be *perpetual*. He is not, we presume, so sanguine as to suppose that emancipation can take place in the course of five or ten years. If so, his friends the colonists will not go along with him, for they look forward to *ages* of slavery. He maintains that emancipation would be an injury to the slaves. We ask how? They might raise less sugar; but this would be the loss of the master, not of the slave. And surely nothing can be more absurd than to hear men exclaim that the abolition of slavery would be the

* Christian Instructor, p. 266.

signal of massacre. The slaves are now kept down under a system of oppression calculated to drive men to despair; and to say that the removal of this oppression would render them unmanageable, is contrary to the first principle—reason.

If the colonists were really willing to divest themselves of that power which is most opposed to the temporal and spiritual welfare of the bondman; were they to give full toleration in religion to the slaves, and the whole of the Lord's day, that they might have an opportunity of attending to the concerns of their souls; were they to encourage marriage, and to give those who marry all those rights to which by their union they are entitled; were they to moderate the tasks, and to substitute rewards and encouragements to labour in place of the lash; were they to countenance the practice of slaves redeeming themselves and their families;* and to prove by their general conduct that they were using their best efforts for raising the slaves in the scale of society, we might give credit to their assertion, that they were opposed to immediate emancipation, because it would be hurtful to the slave. But we are not entitled to expect this from human nature situated as the planters are, and accordingly their conduct has been the very reverse. The government of this country must therefore put down slavery in the colonies, because on Presbyter's own principles it is "sinful," being inconsistent with the temporal and spiritual welfare of the bondman.

Presbyter observes, that independent of the duty of a Christian treating his slaves not only

"with the strictest regard to justice and humanity, but also to use his best efforts to raise them in the scale of society, and promoting the interest of their immortal part—there does not appear, from the express precepts of Scripture, to be any abstract right to freedom inherent in the slave." P. 21.

The way in which we are taught in the word of God is not, by express precepts establishing abstract rights. The Scripture condemns slavery by teaching us that we are all made of one blood, that therefore we should love our neighbour as ourselves, not oppressing him, because we are stronger. It also exhibits men in a great variety of situations, in which this precept is neglected; and by recording God's disapprobation of such conduct, it warns us to hearken to His voice who will bring every work into judgment.

When we are told that we all belong to one family, it is evident that freedom from bondage is the birth-right of every child of Adam. When the scripture requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, it warns us against violating this birth-right, unless a man has forfeited it as he might do in Israel for a time, either by extravagance or crime. It may

* To require the slaves in the colonies to redeem themselves is an act of flagrant injustice. They are entitled to freedom by the appointment of God, and none have a right to require them to purchase their birthright. But it is well known that the planters are so attached to slavery, that they violently oppose the doctrine that a bondman is entitled to insist even on purchasing his freedom. They describe this as "absolutely destructive of the right of property." They are aware, that were slavery abolished the work of the plantations must be differently conducted. Freemen could not be induced to labour in the way the slaves do. They have been treated as beasts, and compelled to work as beasts; and when they become free, they must be treated and made to work as men. Hence the complaint, that free negroes are idle. They are placed under various restrictions, and they will not engage in working with the gangs from which they have escaped. Yet it would be for the planters' interest to have free servants; but on this, as on other subjects connected with their present system, they appear to be judicially blinded, and while the system continues, all our attempts to set before them arguments of duty, humanity, and enlightened interest will be fruitless.

be said, a slave may be in such a state that to restore him to the liberty of which he was unjustly deprived, would be injurious to himself. But does his own interest require that he should continue a part of the goods and chattels of his master, that he should be liable to be sold for his master's debts, and to be torn from his wife and children, that he should be liable to see his wife stripped and flogged in violation of all decency, that his daughters may be legally prostituted, &c.? Let it be remembered we are speaking of the continuance of West India slavery, and the man who *bona fide* maintains that such bondage is not utterly incompatible with "justice and humanity,"—calculated to degrade the bondman "in the scale of society," and to be hurtful to "his immortal part," is not to be reasoned with.

No doubt a man's character is much injured by slavery, and the person who has held him in bondage has this among other things to answer for, and is bound to do all in his power to redress the injury; but that it is necessary to continue his bondage under pretence of removing the maladies which slavery has induced, is absurd and irrational. To talk of leaving the slaves in the colonies in the hands of their masters, to prepare them for freedom, knowing as we do that the planters are obstinately bent on the perpetuation of their bondage, is contrary both to reason and justice.

Presbyter is friendly to the gradual abolition of slavery, and in the mean time would leave the matter in the hands of the colonists. Let us then hear their sentiments on the subject, as expressed in a letter to Lord Grey by Mr. Macqueen, the indefatigable advocate of the planters, upon whom the Jamaica Assembly lately bestowed L.3000 sterling, as the reward of his services. After observing that "the very refuse, the criminals of savage nations" had been brought to the colonies, he proceeds,—

"It is clear that ages of progressive improvement must precede the establishment, among such a race, of that rational freedom which is established in civilized states."

Here we are taught what is intended by *gradual* emancipation; a provision is made for AGES of slavery! Mr. Macqueen, in the next paragraph but one, proceeds to enumerate the "almost impassable barriers" which "separate the races," such as "the colour of the skin, and the smell of the one race," "barbarous manners," disinclination to labour, and more especially "to engage in every species of agricultural labour. These, my Lord, are formidable, and I fear unsurmountable barriers; at least they must for a long time be so." Were the "races" to exchange situations, it would produce a great alteration on the manners of each. The manners of the blacks would gradually become less barbarous, and those of the whites less refined. If the negroes did not discover a disinclination to that species of "agricultural labour" in which they are employed, it would afford a stronger presumption of their being indeed another "race," than any which has been hitherto adduced. Were there an exchange of situations, this disinclination "to labour," and more especially "to engage in any species of agricultural labour," would be transferred as if by magic from the blacks to the whites, and even the difference of "the colour of the skin, and the smell" would be less discernible.

We also learn, how tremblingly alive the colonists are to the "spiritual welfare of the bondman."

"Moreover, while the master is anxious to extend to his bondmen the benefits

of the faith in which he has been instructed, is it reasonable to require of the master, that he shall be compelled to permit his slave to be instructed in a different creed? He merely prefers the established church to the unsteady conventicle.*

It is notorious that the provision made by the established church in the colonies for the instruction of the slaves, is altogether inadequate, and of this Presbyter is well aware; but here we find an avowal, that it is unreasonable to expect that religious toleration should be extended to the slaves. The masters will kindly charge themselves with the care of their souls as well as of their bodies. And let the disregard which they in general discover for their own eternal interests, prove how well they are qualified for the task!

In considering the question of the lawfulness of slavery, it is not necessary to confine ourselves to revelation. The remains of the law of God on the human heart are still so legible, that those who have not the law are a law unto themselves, and by this they shall be judged. There are self-evident principles from which we can reason with the utmost certainty, and to which we unhesitatingly appeal. However men may injure others by depriving them of liberty or property, we all feel when injustice is done to ourselves.

It is true, that in society it is necessary that we be subjected to control, from which we would be free if living alone; but the constitution of every society must be radically vicious, which deprives any of its members of those rights which are not incompatible with the rights of others. That no man is entitled to seize upon another by force, to make him his slave, and to deprive him of the fruits of his labour, is self-evident.

It is also self-evident that nothing can be more contrary to every principle of justice, than for a company of civilized savages to take advantage of the superiority of their arms; to set fire to a peaceful village at dead of night, to seize the trembling inhabitants, to break every tie by which families are bound together, and to carry the wretched captives to a foreign land; to sell them, and to consign them and their offspring to perpetual slavery. We do not require to consult revelation for the unqualified condemnation of such conduct; it is indelibly branded with the mark of injustice in the inmost parts of our rational nature.

Such however is the tenure by which the planters in the colonies hold their property in the hapless posterity of those who thus became the victims of "the unprincipled cupidity of our fathers." We must, however, except those who were purchased in Africa, and who doubtless form the more numerous class. But the only difference between them and the former is, that they were reduced to slavery through the instrumentality of Africans. In the one case, our forefathers, in opposition to every principle of justice and humanity, seized on their prey by force; in the other, they presented such temptations to an uncivilized people as induced them to become their agents in the atrocious crime. The articles exposed by the slave-traders were so much prized, that to obtain them, the natives engaged in constant wars with their neighbours, for the purpose of obtaining captives for sale, and these wars were fomented by those who dared to assume the name of Christians. Nothing can be more evident than that such property, so acquired, can never be legalized. It is true we cannot go far back to ascertain whether the property which men possess was legally obtained at first, but no pre-

* Letter to Lord Grey in *Blackwood's Magazine*, March 1831.

scription can legalize property in our fellow-creatures. Such is the dictate of reason, and on such a subject it is no fallacious guide.

Let us now appeal to revelation. We have already considered the practice of slavery under the Jewish dispensation. Every Israelite was a freeman, with the exception of those who being reduced to poverty, sold themselves, or were sold by his creditor, or by the magistrate, for some crime of which he had been guilty. In every case their bondage was to last but six years, and the law not only secured them such treatment as should not deprive them of the privilege of their birth-right, but required the master, at the expiration of the period, to recompense their service liberally. They might, if they pleased, continue with their master, finding his yoke easy, but still they were his brethren, and the law took care they should be treated as such. They retained the rank of hired servants, and were not to be considered as bondsmen.

It is true the heathen might be purchased as bondsmen ; but this can no more be pleaded in favour of slavery in our days, than the polygamy which was also permitted in Israel. The Creator has the most perfect right to dispose of his creatures as he sees good ; a right which he constantly exercises in his providential dispensations to every individual of mankind. So far from any injustice being done to those who in virtue of this law were sold to an Israelite, their situation was much improved. The yoke under which a bondsman was placed in Israel was very different from the bondage in which slaves were held among the Gentiles. They had a weekly day of rest, and during the sabbatic year their employment must have been very light. They might be punished, but if they received a blow which deprived them of a tooth or an eye, they were free. If by cruel treatment they were driven to run away, they were not to be restored to their master. "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee, *even* among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates where it liketh him best. thou shalt not oppress him." Deut. xxi. 15, 16. Thus did God mark the distinction between the property which a man possessed in his goods and chattels, and in his bondsman. The former might be reclaimed and the holder punished ; the latter was not to be delivered up, and thus were Israel taught, that although God permitted them to see the disorder introduced by sin, even to the extent of reducing their fellow-creatures to slavery, there was a wide difference between the right with which the Creator has invested men over the fruits of their industry, and the right which they can acquire over their fellow-creatures.

Slavery prevailed among the Gentiles, and God provided a refuge for some of the slaves among his chosen people, and, doubtless, by this means, brought some of that class which was most despised to the knowledge of himself. But we shall in vain look to the bondage in Israel for a vindication of colonial bondage. The slavery of the heathen among God's ancient people, was an asylum for persons who had lost their liberty, and who were so favoured as to be sold to an Israelite. The slavery in the West Indies is a system of cruelty, oppression, and degradation, such as the world has never before witnessed.*

* • We do not intend to assert that the treatment of slaves in Rome was not very inhuman, but the species of labour in which the colonial slaves are engaged in consequence of their being employed in labouring the fields, renders their situation pe-

Presbyter is so sensible that the law of Moses affords no countenance to the West India system, that he dismisses it in a single short paragraph, remarking, that from the very peculiar circumstances of the Israelites, it may be held to be "no sufficient guide to Christians." He therefore proceeds to the New Testament, where we shall follow him, previously remarking that it seems passing strange that he should only occupy six pages out of one hundred and thirty-nine, in inquiring into the doctrine of Scripture on a question which, as we have already remarked, is improperly termed political, being one which involves the moral condition of so many of our fellow-creatures. This appears too much to resemble "the *ex parte* statements of tracts and periodical publications" against which our author enters his protest. It appears to argue a suspicion that Scripture is not over favourable to the cause which he has undertaken to defend, and we felt it impossible to avoid recurring to the following sentence as the only explanation of the fact that so short and unsatisfactory a reference should be made to the word of God, on a great moral question in which every child of Adam is so deeply interested.

"We all know how much men attached to a party, or under the influence of some strong feeling, are, with the most honest intentions, liable to be biassed in their judgment; and how unwilling too they naturally are to admit the truth of every fact which militates against their views, or even tends to modify them; nor can any of us be ignorant how generally writers and speakers regard it as a legitimate artifice to throw into the shade all opposing arguments, and to give a high, if not a false colouring, to every thing which tends to advance their cause. But persons of this description—as you, Sir, well know—are very unsafe guides on a subject so interesting to the feelings, and involving such momentous considerations as those which relate to the state of our western colonies." Pp. 12, 13.

"There are many directions given to Christian masters as to the treatment of their slaves (for such is the meaning of the word *douloi*, translated in our version, *servants*;) and to Christian slaves as to the duty which they owe their masters, which all tacitly, but unequivocally infer that the condition was not positively prohibited." P. 18.

The directions in the New Testament, were intended to regulate the duties of masters and servants in every age, and under every modification of servitude. They are accordingly as applicable to masters and servants in Britain or America, as they were to the contemporaries of the Apostles in Greece and Rome. It is true that *douloi* means slaves, and such were generally or universally the persons immediately addressed, but *douleia* is applicable to every kind of service, and is not necessarily confined to compulsory labour. Christ was the Father's *doulos*, yet never was service so free. The Apostles were Christ's *douloi*, but they were his *freemen*.

No argument in favour of slavery can be drawn from the directions given to masters as to the treatment of their slaves, in the New Testament. Christ's kingdom is not of this world, it is spiritual—established in the hearts of his subjects, and is adapted to man in every state of society. It cannot, therefore, be expected that slavery more than numberless other abuses was to be denounced by the Apostles. The disciples were a little flock, sufficiently obnoxious to those who knew not God, without the promulgation of principles subversive of the established order of society, for such would have been an "authoritative precept" as to the

culiarly dreadful. In every civilized country cattle are used in agriculture, but in the West Indies human labour is preferred.

unlawfulness of slavery. It was not the intention of our Lord that his people should go out of the world; it was his will that every man should abide in the same calling wherein he was called, provided he could in that situation do justly and walk humbly with God. The great lesson which Christianity teaches believers is, that they are strangers and pilgrims on earth. He "gave himself for us that he might deliver us from this present evil world." The religion of Jesus produced no violent convulsion, but it contains principles which, so far from making void, establish and confirm those natural rights to which every member of the human family is entitled, and of which he cannot be deprived without injustice, and trampling on the authority of him who made all men of one blood, and commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves. This is admitted by Presbyter.

"The mild and affectionate spirit of the gospel requires that, without distinction of bond or free, we should regard each other as brethren, and conduct ourselves towards the very meanest of our fellow-creatures with the kindness due to members of the same family. This necessarily implies an entire change in the relation which subsists between a master and his slaves, and, by immediate consequence, although not by direct statute, leads under favourable circumstances to their complete manumission—an effect actually produced in the condition of the lower classes within the bounds of European christendom." P. 20.

Hence it appears, that so far from sanctioning or approving of slavery, Christianity annihilates it, unless its influence is counteracted by unfavourable circumstances.

"Presbyter observes, that 'there is not a single precept' in the 'New Testament' directly condemning the state of servitude, to which the laws and customs of the world had reduced so large a proportion of the lower class." P. 18.

Such a precept could not have been delivered without a complete departure from the uniform mode of teaching adopted by the apostles. Christianity is the revelation of God's righteousness, in which the believing sinner, be his circumstances what they may, is exalted. When a person asked the Lord to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him, he replied, who made me a judge or a divider over you? Possibly the claim was just, but Christ would not decide such questions; and when he committed to his apostles the keys of the kingdom of heaven, he gave them no power to regulate the usages of society by "positive precept." They were commanded to preach salvation to all, and to teach believers to live soberly, righteously, and godly; and according to our Lord's similitude, the heaven has influenced the state of society, and led to the complete manumission "of the lower classes within the bounds of European christendom." It was not as our author intimates, because "society was not then ripe for pure institutions," that the Lord did not render the abolition of slavery "imperative by divine commandment," but because his doctrine was intended for men in every possible state of society, which he never directly regulated.

In short, we see that in the directions given in the New Testament respecting slavery, the apostles proceeded according to their uniform practice of not attempting to regulate national concerns. They took the world as they found it, preaching repentance to dying sinners, and inviting them to take on them Christ's easy yoke. Great alterations were to take place in the world, but their doctrine was to continue the same. The directions given to masters and servants, therefore, give no sanction to the state of slavery. They indeed prove, that a man may

be a Christian in either of these relations, but there is nothing in the New Testament which gives the smallest title to a master to look on his slave as his goods and chattels, and to suppose that he is at liberty to sell him as he does his horse. The directions in the New Testament refer to those whom the apostles found in the relation of master and slave, but they afford not the remotest sanction to purchase a fellow-creature, or to dispose of him for money. On the contrary, masters are commanded to give unto their servants that which is *just and equal*, which includes the enjoyment of all their natural rights, and is in fact a denunciation of slavery. Slavery may be so modified by custom and by the laws of the country, that although an unnatural state, it may not be inconsistent with the comfort of the slave; but the question which our author undertakes to discuss is West India slavery: by this system a man is the absolute property of his master, is liable to be torn from his family and sold; besides many other circumstances degrading to human nature. Will any man affirm, that such a system is sanctioned by the word of God? Does it not clearly reveal his wrath against all such ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men?

It is true, that in the New Testament, Christian servants are commanded to obey their masters, to suffer patiently, and not to be depressed on account of the situation in which they are placed, because they have obtained an eternal inheritance. Supposing a Christian to fall among a nation of cannibals who fattened their slaves for the knife, his duty would be precisely the same. He would be called to see the hand of God in the situation in which he was placed, to regard it as one of those "all things" which should work together for his good, and in patience to possess his soul. But in such circumstances would he be bound to the service of his master by any moral tie? ought he to be prevented from escaping by the consideration that his master had bought him, and that he was his property? Certainly not: he would be justified in escaping the moment an opportunity presented itself. It would be his duty to do so; the law of self-preservation would require it, and consequently the tenure by which his master held him must be an unlawful tenure. And where is the difference of the tenure by which the planter holds his slave? He acquired him at first by an express violation of the divine law against man-stealing. He retains him in a state of brutish degradation and ignorance, because he knows that such slavery can only subsist when the slave is thus degraded. Let education—let the elevating influence of Christianity become general among the slaves, and the system would be at an end. The lash would drop from the hand of the driver; the indecent punishment of females must cease, as well as the right of prostituting the wives and daughters of the slaves. It may be asked, would not Christianity teach the slaves to submit even to the present system? Yes, it would and does teach the few Christian slaves to bear their lot with cheerfulness, as it would do if they were fed for the slaughter; but were the whole or the greater part Christians, were they possessed of that power which the knowledge of the doctrine of Christ implies, Prov. xxiv. 5. they would burst their bonds,—or rather their masters durst not for a moment think of retaining them.

Supposing a master with ten Christian slaves cast on a desert island. Would they be required to submit to all his caprices, to allow him to drive them to work with a cart-whip, to claim uncontrolled dominion over them? No; it would be their duty to treat him with respect, but

if he acted unreasonably, they would be fully justified in placing him in a state of coercion till he came to himself. Now, the proportion of slaves in the West Indies is more than ten to one, and Christianity would no more require them to continue in their present abject condition, than it would require the ten individuals in the desert island to submit to the lash of their solitary tyrant, or the slave among the cannibals to wait till his master was pleased to eat him.

The case of Onesimus, to which Presbyter refers, perfectly accords with all the directions given on the subject of slavery in the New Testament. He had fled from his master. Although it would have been a comfort to the apostle to have retained him, the circumstances were such that he considered it proper to send him back with an earnest recommendation to Philemon. The apostle, however, did not follow this course, merely because Onesimus had been a slave. Had Philemon not been a Christian in whom Paul had the fullest confidence, that he "would do more" than was asked of him, he durst not have sent back Onesimus. The divine law prohibited his doing so, Deut. xxiii. 15. So slight was the tenure by which a master in Israel held even his Gentile slave, that no Israelite was permitted to send him back.

It is true, the apostle laid down no "authoritative precept as to the unlawfulness of slavery in the abstract," and we have shown that he could not have done so without entirely deviating from the mode of teaching which Christ was pleased to prescribe; but he enjoined Philemon to receive Onesimus, "not now as a servant, but a brother beloved," and has thus left on record the duty of every believer to his Christian dependants. While in the commandment "to masters to give unto their servants that which is just and equal, and to forbear threatening, because their master is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him," he cautions masters against regarding their slaves as an inferior race, and teaches them to remember that all mankind belong to the same family. This, as the writer of the Demerara Gazette justly remarks, is in fact breaking the chains of slavery.

Our author disclaims the vindication of perpetual slavery, which he justly remarks can *never* "be favourable to the temporal and spiritual welfare of a human being." He alleges, however, that since there is no positive precept as to the unlawfulness of slavery, there is room for reasonings and conclusions, and his conclusion is that emancipation should be gradual. But might not another, from his premises, draw a different conclusion? Slavery, they might say, is acknowledged and regulated in the New Testament. It will hardly be maintained that those who were washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God, were unfit for freedom. It will hardly be affirmed that Onesimus, in whose company an apostle found so much enjoyment, was not sufficiently raised in the scale of society to be fit for freedom. Yet no positive precept is given for his emancipation. Hence it appears that the gradualists cannot plead the authority of Scripture for the abolition of slavery.

We have already made some remarks on the principle that God cannot regulate sin. We have shewn that for wise and holy purposes he does in particular cases suspend the execution of his own law. Of this we have a noted example in the case of marriage. God made one woman for one man, and thus condemned polygamy. This evil had been introduced, and had become very common, and Moses, in delivering laws for a stiff-necked people, was directed to *regulate polygamy*, and our

Lord informs the Jews that it was permitted because of the hardness of their hearts, for "from the beginning it was not so." God had clearly intimated his will, not by an express precept, but by the example of Adam and Eve, who were to be no more two but one flesh, and also by the numerical equality of the sexes; and he informs us that he had most important ends in this appointment. Mal. ii. 14-15. While the Lord enjoined on believers an adherence to the original law of marriage, we do not find the Apostles issuing an "authoritative precept" that those who had more wives than one should put them away, any more than that they should liberate their slaves; but this does not imply that either slavery or polygamy is lawful. The Apostles did not exclude a man from the churches who had two wives, but only excluded him from holding office. 1st Tim. iii. 2-12. Had any man, after professing the faith, married another wife while the former lived, he would, according to our Lord's decision, have been excluded as an adulterer.

On the whole, it appears from the principles of human nature, as well as from our experience of the conduct of the colonists, that there is no prospect of the peaceable liberation of the slaves, except by the interference of the British government. In this great act of national justice every attention ought to be paid to the interests of the planters, but the duty of emancipation is imperative, and cannot be delayed with impunity. Long has God heard the groanings of the bondsmen in the West Indies, long has his patience waited till Britain should loose the bonds of wickedness and break the heavy yoke under which the hapless negroes were placed "by the unprincipled cupidity of our forefathers," and under which they have for ages groaned; and should she still refuse to listen to the overwhelming evidence of the degraded condition of eight hundred thousand of our fellow-creatures, deliverance will probably come to them in a way which will cause the ears of all who hear of it to tingle, and too late will the colonists and their friends in this country regret that they so obstinately resisted the call for emancipation.

We cannot close these remarks without expressing our heartfelt regret for the sudden and unexpected removal of him by whom this review was begun. His commanding talents, his extensive information, his unbending integrity and undaunted boldness eminently qualified him for being the successful opponent of that system by which so many of our fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects are doomed to the most abject slavery. He is now removed, he has finished his course, and it was worthy of his character that one of his last and most splendid efforts was in favour of the despised negro race.* Their cause is the cause of humanity, and although many of their friends may fall before the contest is decided, it shall eventually triumph, and when the mystery of God is finished, it will appear that even the diabolical system of West India slavery has been conducive to the divine glory and the salvation of many of that church which God purchased with his own blood.

* See Dr. Thomson's Speech at the Meeting of the Edinburgh Society for the Abolition of Slavery, October 19, 1830.